

# District Review Report

## Webster Public Schools

Comprehensive review conducted  
March 5–8, 2019

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Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and  
Secondary Education

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## Executive Summary

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In 2019, 1,831 students were enrolled in the Webster Public Schools. The district consists of three schools and following the completion of its new elementary school in 2016, it reconfigured its schools into one PK-4 elementary school, one grade 5-8 middle school, and one grade 9-12 high school. The community is supportive of its schools and there is a culture of collaboration among city government officials, members of the school committee, and district leaders. Budget development and monitoring practices are transparent, and the city has confidence that school leaders are making educationally sound decisions.

The current superintendent was hired in July 2017; the elementary and high school principals are new, and the middle school principal is in his second year. The superintendent increased district leadership in curriculum by adding a director for math and science, who joined the existing director for literacy and Title I. In her 2018 entry plan, the superintendent identified the challenges confronting the district: the lack of a cohesive curriculum plan K-12, the lack of consistent use of data to inform instruction, attendance issues, and inconsistent communication between administrators and teachers.

With the identification by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the district and each of its schools as requiring assistance or intervention in the form of focused/targeted support, the district embarked upon an ambitious curriculum alignment and documentation program K-12, a selection of a universal assessment tools for literacy and math, and focused professional development K-12 in math and K-4 in literacy. Further, the superintendent has set forth in each of her two years a list of instructional strategies focused on improving teaching, adding rigor to the curriculum, and aligning school improvement plans and the budget. While educators embrace the need for change, some struggle with the quick pace and the volume of initiatives, particularly when the components of school turnaround plans are added. Improvement plans are not clearly linked to the superintendent's yearly plans nor do they list budget implications; of all the district and school plans, only the elementary school improvement plan has measurable outcomes.

District and school leaders recognize that there is a significant gap in achievement among student populations but do not have a strong system of tiered supports in grades 5-12 to support all learners. Further, the district recognizes that there are some barriers for some students in access to rigorous coursework, but they have not yet developed a plan to address these.

Human resources systems are in place, are supportive of educators, and include a growing professional development program and mentoring program with renewed teacher involvement in planning and evaluation. The capacity for supervision and evaluation by building leaders is compromised by two main factors: a high number of supervisees for each supervisor, and, at the secondary level, student discipline issues that pull school leaders away from classroom visits.

## ***Instruction***

The team observed 56 classes throughout the district: 16 at the high school, 24 at the middle school, and 16 at the elementary school. The team observed 27 ELA classes, 18 mathematics classes, 6 science classes, and 5 classes in other subject areas. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members collected data using DESE's Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is presented in Appendix C.

In observed classrooms districtwide, established routines and positive supports ensured that students behaved appropriately and the climate was conducive to teaching and learning. At the same time, during their classroom observations, review team members found that the quality of instruction was inconsistent across the district, with a higher quality of instruction at the elementary school than at the middle and high schools. Teachers did not always provide students with opportunities to assume responsibility for their learning, engage in higher-order thinking, communicate their ideas with each other, or engage with meaningful real-world tasks. Furthermore, observers noted that teachers did not consistently structure lessons to be accessible by all learners or use a variety of instructional strategies in response to students' needs.

## **Strengths**

- The superintendent promotes a culture of accountability for student learning with administrators and teachers.
- The district developed and implemented a collaborative process to review and adopt new curriculum materials for K–8 and high-school mathematics. As a result, all math teachers now have access to standards-aligned curricular and assessment materials.
- In most observed classrooms districtwide, established routines and positive supports to ensure appropriate student behavior and a positive classroom climate were firmly in place.
- The district has put into use a common benchmark assessment K–12 that is aligned across grade levels and provides a uniform measure of students' academic performance and progress.
- The district has recently formalized a two-year professional development plan and has begun to include teachers in its planning process.
- District and municipal leaders have a positive working relationship, which has contributed to a collaborative budget process.

## **Challenges and Areas for Growth**

- The district has not developed a focused approach to improvement planning that is marked by targeted planning, a collaborative learning culture, and a shared understanding and commitment to the district's mission and strategies.
- Students from historically marginalized groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, do not have equitable access to advanced

coursework, and they remain under-enrolled in accelerated learning pathways and Advanced Placement test-taking.

- The district has not established systems for the efficient and purposeful analysis and use of data from a variety of assessments to guide decision making at the district, school, and classroom levels and to assess whether programs and practices are leading to improved access, opportunity, and achievement for all students.
- In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent across the district with a higher quality of instruction at the elementary school than at the middle and high schools.
- The district does not have an integrated data management system that provides staff, students, teachers, and students' families with assessment information that is clear, timely, and easily understood and that can be used to track students' progress and assess the effectiveness of curricula.
- The district's educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback that helps them improve their practice.
- The district does not have a proactive approach and consistent system of support to meet the needs of all students and to ensure equitable learning experiences.
- Systems to engage the district's diverse student populations and their families and caregivers are not aligned and sufficiently robust to achieve the district's goals.
- The district's public budget document does not clearly link district and school goals, and budget priorities.

## **Recommendations**

- The district should build upon its emerging culture of accountability by ensuring that its District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans include measurable benchmarks, clear timelines, and regular cycles of review and modification. The district's planning documents should be developed with the benefit of widespread input from stakeholders.
- The district should ensure that all students, including students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, have equitable access to accelerated learning pathways and advanced courses.
- The district should ensure that school leaders implement practices to monitor and improve instruction.
- The district should create a culture of shared responsibility for the effective use of data to improve teaching and learning by implementing data practices that drive program and instructional decisions and by regularly and systematically monitoring their impact on student outcomes.

- The district should promote educators' growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.
- The district should develop and implement a coherent, research-based system of supports accessible to all students, including those receiving special education services.
- The district should enhance its current practices to strengthen collaborative relationships with families and community partners and to ensure that family engagement practices are equitable.
- The district should develop a budget document that is clear, complete, and details how the budget supports district and school goals, how much schools and programs cost, and how outside funds are used.

## Webster Public Schools District Review Overview

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### **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 consider carefully the effectiveness of systemwide functions, with reference to the six district standards used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. Reviews identify systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. 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**

Reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards above. A district review team consisting of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards reviews documentation, data, and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to individual schools. The team conducts interviews and focus group sessions with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' association representatives, administrators, teachers, students, and students' families. Team members also observe classroom instruction. Subsequent to the onsite review, the team meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting a draft report to DESE. DESE edits and fact-checks the draft report and sends it to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website.

### **Site Visit**

The site visit to the Webster Public Schools was conducted from March 5–8, 2019, following a one-day school cancellation for snow. The site visit included 32 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 126 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted 3 focus groups with 6 elementary-school teachers, 19 middle-school teachers, and 29 high-school teachers.

A list of review team members, information about review activities, and the site visit schedule are in Appendix A, and Appendix B provides information about enrollment, attendance, and expenditures. The team observed classroom instruction in 56 classrooms in 3 schools. The team collected data using DESE's Instructional Inventory, a tool for recording observed characteristics of standards-based teaching. This data is contained in Appendix C.

## District Profile

Webster has a town manager form of government and the chair of the school committee is elected by the members. The five members of the school committee meet twice per month during the school year and once per month in the summer.

The superintendent has been in the position since 2017. The district leadership team includes the director of math and science curriculum, the director of literacy and Title I, the director of student support services, and the business manager. Central office positions have increased over the past two years. The district has three principals leading three schools. There are five other school administrators: three assistant principals and two deans of students. In the 2018–2019 school year, there were 136 teachers in the district.

In the 2018–2019 school year, 1,855 students were enrolled in the district’s 3 schools:

**Table 1: Webster Public Schools  
Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment\*, 2018–2019**

School	Type	Grades Served	Enrollment
Park Avenue Elementary School	ES	Pre-K–4	827
Webster Middle School	MS	5–8	589
Bartlett High School	HS	9–12	439
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3 schools</b>	<b>Pre-K–12</b>	<b>1,855</b>
*As of October 1, 2018			

Between 2014 and 2018 overall student enrollment decreased by 0.2 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners (ELs) and former ELs) as compared with the state are provided in Tables B1a and B1b in Appendix B.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was similar to the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for 48 K–12 districts of similar size (1,000–1,999 students) in fiscal year 2017: \$14,343 as compared with \$14,233 (see [District Analysis and Review Tool Detail: Staffing & Finance](#) ). Actual net school spending has been above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table B3 in Appendix B.



## Student Performance

**Note:** The Next-Generation MCAS assessment is administered to grades 3–8 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics; it was administered for the first time in 2017. (For more information, see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/results-faq.html>.) The MCAS is administered to grades 5 and 8 in science and to grade 10 in ELA, math, and science. Data from the two assessments are presented separately because the tests are different and cannot be compared.

**Table 2: Webster Public Schools  
Accountability Percentile, Criterion Reference Target (CRT) Percentage, Reason for Classification**

School	Accountability Percentile	CRT Percentage	Overall Classification	Reason For Classification
Park Avenue Elementary	22	88%	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for EL and former EL
Webster Middle School	11	61%	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for students with disabilities and EL and former EL
Bartlett High School	6	31%	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest performing 10% of schools and low subgroup performance for White students, economically disadvantaged students, and high needs students
District	--	64%	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for Asian students and EL and former EL

**Table 3: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	46	479.4	484.8	5.4	490.3	-5.5
Asian	18	487.4	489.8	2.4	511.6	-21.8
Hispanic or Latino	249	476.9	482.1	5.2	489.7	-7.6
Multi-Race	58	483.7	493.2	9.5	502.8	-9.6
White	538	484.6	493.3	8.7	504.2	-10.9
High Needs	599	477.0	484.5	7.5	490.1	-5.6
Econ. Dis.	524	477.1	485.1	8.0	490.2	-5.1
SWD	211	467.0	471.0	4.0	480.8	-9.8
EL	98	470.6	481.5	10.9	488.4	-6.9
All	914	482.4	489.7	7.3	500.5	-10.8

Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations

**Table 4: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS Math Scaled Scores Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	47	473.5	477.3	3.8	486.9	-9.6
Asian	18	484.0	490.6	6.6	514.3	-23.7
Hispanic or Latino	249	472.4	474.9	2.5	487.4	-12.5
Multi-Race	58	479.9	484.6	4.7	499.7	-15.1
White	536	481.2	486.0	4.8	501.8	-15.8
High Needs	597	472.4	477.2	4.8	488.2	-11.0
Econ. Dis.	523	472.3	477.3	5.0	487.7	-10.4
SWD	211	464.7	465.2	0.5	479.2	-14.0
EL	99	467.5	478.4	10.9	488.5	-10.1
All	913	478.5	482.5	4.0	498.4	-15.9

Next Generation MCAS Achievement Levels: 440–470 Not Meeting Expectations; 470–500 Partially Meeting Expectations; 500–530 Meeting Expectations; 530–560 Exceeding Expectations

**Table 5: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	46	10%	24%	14	31%	-7
Asian	18	24%	33%	9	71%	-38
Hispanic or Latino	249	13%	21%	8	31%	-10
Multi-Race	58	16%	36%	20	54%	-18
White	538	21%	38%	17	58%	-20
High Needs	599	11%	24%	13	31%	-7
Econ. Dis.	524	11%	25%	14	32%	-7
SWD	211	4%	7%	3	14%	-7
EL	98	3%	24%	21	30%	-6
All	914	18%	32%	14	51%	-19

**Table 6: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	47	4%	15%	11	26%	-11
Asian	18	24%	33%	9	74%	-41
Hispanic or Latino	249	8%	10%	2	27%	-17
Multi-Race	58	13%	17%	4	49%	-32
White	536	17%	23%	6	55%	-32
High Needs	597	7%	12%	5	28%	-16
Econ. Dis.	523	7%	12%	5	27%	-15
SWD	211	2%	3%	1	14%	-11
EL	99	4%	14%	10	30%	-16
All	913	14%	19%	5	48%	-29

**Table 7: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS ELA Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	5	--	--	--	85%	--
Asian	6	--	--	--	95%	--
Hispanic or Latino	22	50%	59%	9	78%	-19
Multi-Race	5	--	--	--	93%	--
White	64	86%	80%	-6	94%	-14
High Needs	58	64%	60%	-4	79%	-19
Econ. Dis.	51	67%	67%	0	81%	-14
SWD	18	26%	11%	-15	69%	-58
EL	13	50%	38%	-12	64%	-26
All	102	81%	76%	-5	91%	-15

**Table 8: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
African American/Black	5	--	--	--	60%	--
Asian	6	--	--	--	91%	--
Hispanic or Latino	22	19%	50%	31	56%	-6
Multi-Race	5	--	--	--	79%	--
White	63	74%	68%	-6	85%	-17
High Needs	58	35%	45%	10	57%	-12
Econ. Dis.	51	40%	49%	9	59%	-10
SWD	18	5%	6%	1	40%	-34
EL	13	17%	31%	14	44%	-13
All	101	62%	63%	1	78%	-15

**Table 9: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	23	6%	0%	22%	13%	7	30%
Asian	15	10%	--	--	40%	30	68%
Hispanic or Latino	111	17%	16%	9%	14%	-3	30%
Multi-Race	24	27%	27%	14%	17%	-10	54%
White	221	28%	31%	33%	32%	4	60%
High Needs	239	15%	17%	15%	17%	2	31%
Econ. Dis.	211	15%	19%	16%	18%	3	32%
SWD	88	8%	4%	3%	3%	-5	21%
EL	42	5%	4%	8%	19%	14	20%
All	397	25%	27%	27%	25%	0	53%

**Table 10: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Grade	N	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
3	156	22%	51%	29	52%	-1
4	152	19%	31%	12	53%	-22
5	151	14%	26%	12	54%	-28
6	133	18%	21%	3	51%	-30
7	160	18%	32%	14	46%	-14
8	162	19%	31%	12	51%	-20
3–8	914	18%	32%	14	51%	-19

**Table 11 Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in Grades 3–8, 2017–2018**

Grade	N	2017	2018	Change	State (2018)	Above/Below
3	157	19%	27%	8	50%	-23
4	153	12%	22%	10	48%	-26
5	152	7%	18%	11	46%	-28
6	131	13%	11%	-2	47%	-36
7	160	15%	19%	4	46%	-27
8	160	16%	17%	1	50%	-33
3–8	913	14%	19%	5	48%	-29

**Table 12: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grades 5, 8, and 10, 2015–2018**

Grade	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
5	151	15%	13%	16%	18%	3	47%
8	159	10%	21%	15%	15%	5	35%
10	87	64%	54%	55%	55%	-9	74%
All	397	25%	27%	27%	25%	0	52%

**Table 13: Webster Public Schools  
English Language Arts and Math Mean Student Growth Percentile, 2018**

Grade	ELA			Math		
	N (2018)	2018	State (2018)	N (2018)	2018	State (2018)
3	--	--	--	--	--	--
4	137	53.6	50.0	138	48.7	50.1
5	134	44.4	50.1	135	55.4	50.0
6	120	52.5	50.1	119	55.0	50.0
7	137	59.0	50.0	137	60.0	50.0
8	137	57.3	50.0	135	41.7	50.0
10	86	40.0	49.9	85	46.4	49.9

**Table 14: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3–8
Park Avenue	53%	32%	--	--	--	--	42%
Webster Middle	--	--	26%	22%	32%	34%	29%
District	51%	31%	26%	21%	32%	31%	32%
State	52%	53%	54%	51%	46%	51%	51%

**Table 15: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations by School and Grade, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	3-8
Park Avenue	29%	22%	--	--	--	--	25%
Webster Middle	--	--	18%	11%	20%	18%	17%
District	27%	22%	18%	11%	19%	17%	19%
State	50%	48%	46%	47%	46%	50%	48%

**Table 16: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10, 2018**

School	ELA	Math
Bartlett High	79%	66%
State	91%	78%

**Table 17: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced by School and Grade, 2018**

School	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	Total
Park Avenue	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Webster Middle	--	--	18%	--	--	16%	--	17%
Bartlett High	--	--	--	--	--	--	58%	58%
District	--	--	18%	--	--	15%	55%	25%
State	--	--	47%	--	--	35%	74%	52%

**Table 18: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS ELA Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018**

School	All	High Needs	Econ. Dis.	SWD	EL	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Park Avenue	42%	32%	35%	8%	30%	--	--	33%	50%	45%
Webster Middle	29%	21%	21%	8%	22%	21%	33%	17%	28%	36%
District	32%	24%	25%	7%	24%	24%	33%	21%	36%	38%
State	51%	31%	32%	14%	30%	31%	71%	31%	54%	58%

**Table 19: Webster Public Schools  
Next-Generation MCAS Math Percent Meeting and Exceeding Expectations by School, 2018**

School	All	High Needs	Econ. Dis.	SWD	EL	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Multi-race	White
Park Avenue	25%	18%	18%	5%	19%	--	--	18%	31%	27%
Webster Middle	17%	10%	11%	3%	10%	9%	33%	6%	13%	23%
District	19%	12%	12%	3%	14%	15%	33%	10%	17%	23%
State	48%	28%	27%	14%	30%	26%	74%	27%	49%	55%

**Table 20: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS ELA and Math Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Grade 10 by School and Student Group, 2015–2018**

School	ELA					Math				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr-Change	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change
Bartlett High	89%	83%	82%	79%	-10	69%	57%	64%	66%	-3
African American/Black	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Hispanic	81%	67%	47%	59%	-22	53%	29%	20%	50%	-3
Multi-race	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
White	91%	89%	88%	84%	-7	70%	64%	76%	73%	3
High Needs	83%	75%	66%	62%	-21	55%	49%	37%	46%	-9
Econ. Dis.	81%	82%	69%	68%	-13	60%	49%	42%	50%	-10
SWD	59%	47%	27%	13%	-46	20%	53%	0%	7%	-13
EL	--	--	45%	38%	--	--	--	18%	31%	--

**Table 21: Webster Public Schools  
MCAS Science Percent Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Science by School and Student Group, 2015–2018**

School	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change
Park Avenue	--	--	--	--	--	--
Webster Middle	293	--	17%	17%	17%	--
African American/Black	17	--	--	7%	0%	--
Asian	10	--	--	--	20%	--
Hispanic	85	--	9%	6%	8%	--
Multi-race	20	--	11%	6%	15%	--
White	158	--	20%	21%	23%	--
High Needs	178	--	9%	10%	12%	--
Econ. Dis.	156	--	10%	11%	13%	--
SWD	64	--	2%	2%	2%	--
EL	30	--	6%	7%	17%	--
Bartlett High	81	31%	56%	56%	58%	27
African American/Black	5	--	--	--	--	--
Asian	5	--	--	--	--	--
Hispanic	19	24%	41%	25%	42%	18
Multi-race	4	42%	--	--	--	--
White	48	34%	61%	60%	65%	31
High Needs	44	24%	41%	35%	41%	17
Econ. Dis.	40	25%	47%	41%	45%	20
SWD	13	11%	13%	0%	15%	4
EL	10	9%	--	--	20%	11

**Table 22: Webster Public Schools  
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	3	77.8	--	--	--	--	80.1
Asian	3	--	--	--	--	--	94.3
Hispanic or Latino	28	36.4	52.4	59.1	64.3	27.9	73.8
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	9	--	--	71.4	77.8	--	86.5
White	84	73.3	66.7	74.4	67.9	-5.4	92.2
High needs	85	61.5	47.1	64.6	56.5	-5	78.0
Economically Disadvantaged*	74	57.7	47.6	65.2	58.1	0.4	77.4
SWD	32	65.0	20.0	44.0	43.8	-21.2	72.4
EL	6	--	--	83.3	50.0	--	64.1
All	127	69.8	65.2	72.1	67.7	-2.1	87.9

\* Four-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2015 rates.

**Table 23: Webster Public Schools  
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2014–2017**

Group	N (2017)	2014	2015	2016	2017	4-yr Change	State (2017)
African American/Black	1	42.9	77.8	--	--	--	84.2
Asian	3	--	--	--	--	--	95.4
Hispanic or Latino	22	63.2	36.4	52.4	59.1	-4.1	77.4
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	7	--	--	--	85.7	--	87.7
White	78	69.7	75.2	69.0	74.4	4.7	93.9
High needs	82	60.6	62.8	50.0	65.9	5.3	83.0
Economically Disadvantaged*	69	63.2	59.2	49.2	66.7	3.5	82.0
SWD	25	33.3	70.0	25.0	44.0	10.7	76.8
EL	6	--	--	--	83.3	--	69.0
All	111	68.3	71.4	67.0	73.0	4.7	90.1

\* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students from low-income families used for 2014 rates.

**Table 24: Webster Public Schools  
In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015--2018**

Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	11.8	--	4.3	4.0	-7.8	3.4
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	0.6
Hispanic or Latino	6.6	0.2	2.2	3.8	-2.8	2.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino	7.4	0.8	--	2.3	-5.1	2.3
White	5.3	--	1.0	1.3	-4	1.4
High Needs	6.6	0.1	1.8	2.5	-4.1	2.7
Economically disadvantaged*	6.6	0.1	1.9	2.6	-4	2.9
SWD	7.2	--	3.0	2.9	-4.3	3.3
ELs	--	--	2.4	1.7	--	1.8
All	6.0	0.1	1.4	2.2	-3.8	1.8

**Table 25: Webster Public Schools  
Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	9.4	11.1	9.6	4.0	-5.4	6.0
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	0.7
Hispanic or Latino	3.4	7.0	5.9	9.9	6.5	5.1
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino	5.8	5.6	--	11.4	5.6	3.3
White	4.1	5.2	4.8	4.6	0.5	1.4
High Needs	4.6	7.0	6.4	8.7	4.1	4.6
Economically disadvantaged*	4.6	7.0	6.0	9.2	4.6	5.4
SWD	5.6	9.0	8.5	13.5	7.9	5.8
EL	--	--	4.8	4.4	--	3.7
All	4.3	5.7	5.1	6.8	2.5	2.9

**Table 26: Webster Public Schools  
Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	5.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	-5.0	2.9
Asian	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	8.3	0.6
Hispanic or Latino	7.8	10.0	12.3	3.3	-4.5	4.5
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino	9.1	14.3	0.0	3.0	-6.1	1.9
White	6.3	6.0	5.9	2.5	-3.8	1.0
High Needs	8.9	11.7	6.8	4.0	-4.9	3.6
Economically disadvantaged*	7.1	13.1	7.3	4.2	-2.9	3.6
SWD	11.6	8.1	9.2	4.2	-7.4	3.4
EL	7.1	7.7	0.0	10.0	2.9	7.6
All	6.4	6.8	6.2	2.8	-3.6	1.9

**Table 27: Webster Public Schools  
Advanced Coursework Completion by Student Group, 2017–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
African American/Black	6	--	--	--	--
Asian	5	--	--	--	--
Hispanic or Latino	40	--	--	--	--
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic or Latino	17	--	--	--	--
White	151	60.3	64.9	4.6	65.4
High Needs	103	41.9	40.8	-1.1	48.9
Economically disadvantaged	86	45.9	41.9	-4.0	55.0
SWD	29	--	--	--	--
EL	18	--	--	--	--
All	219	60.2	62.1	1.9	64.8

**Table 28: Webster Public Schools  
Progress toward Attaining English Language Proficiency, 2017–2018**

Group	Non-high school					High school				
	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
EL	88	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
All	88	70.7	37.5	-33.2	57.1	--	--	--	--	--



**Table 29: Webster Public Schools  
Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group,\* 2017–2018**

Group	Non-high school					High school				
	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target	N (2018)	2017	2018	Change	Target
African American/Black	70	--	--	--	--	18	--	--	--	--
Asian	23	--	--	--	--	12	--	--	--	--
Hispanic or Latino	378	--	--	--	--	107	--	--	--	--
Multi-Race, non-Hisp./Lat.	82	--	--	--	--	36	--	--	--	--
White	771	13.2	13.2	0.0	12.2	308	20.6	29.5	-8.9	19.6
High needs	896	22.4	22.8	-0.4	20.5	281	30.8	41.3	-10.5	28.9
Economically Disadvantaged	729	25.2	25.0	0.2	22.6	215	32.0	42.8	-10.8	29.4
SWD	292	--	--	--	--	97	--	--	--	--
EL	177	--	--	--	--	46	--	--	--	--
All	1,330	17.1	17.8	-0.7	16.0	481	21.2	30.4	-9.2	20.1

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

## Leadership and Governance

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### ***Contextual Background***

Webster has a five-member school committee chaired by a member elected from the body. The committee, which does not have sub-committees, meets twice monthly during the school year and once each month during the summer. Meetings, which are focused on appropriate school committee business, are legally posted and minutes are included on the district's website. Committee members have established a collaborative relationship with each other and with the superintendent. The school committee works with the superintendent and with town officials to establish a budget that the district deems adequate and the committee regularly reviews the budget at public meetings to ensure that spending is aligned with the approved budget. The committee annually evaluates the superintendent and approves annual goals for her performance. Finally, the school committee regularly reviews student performance data and is aware of improvement efforts underway in the district.

The superintendent was hired in the summer of 2017. Since that time, the district has seen a dramatic turnover in school leadership; between 2017 and 2019 each of the district's three schools welcomed new principals. The superintendent has increased central leadership and streamlined the function of the leadership team through the creation of directors of mathematics and science, and literacy and Title I. The district leadership team includes the business manager and the director of student support services. The schools are led by three principals, each of whom has an assistant principal. Two deans support student behavior in the district.

Improvement planning in the district is in a state of flux. At the time of the onsite in March 2019, the district's strategic plan, which was established under the previous superintendent, had expired and was no longer relevant to improvement initiatives underway in the district. Instead, the district was using a rather broad outline of its priorities and initiatives in a document entitled Webster Public Schools Instructional Strategies that has been published for the last two years. While establishing priorities, this document is missing the specificity necessary to drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs and practices. Planning at the school level was incomplete. Webster Middle School and Bartlett High School did not have operational school improvement plans that had been approved by the district. Planning at the middle and high schools also involved the schools' emerging response to Turnaround Site Visit Reports that have been provided to them by the American Institutes for Research in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Park Avenue Elementary School is implementing an approved School Improvement Grant and an operational plan that is associated with a School Redesign Grant.

## ***Strength Finding***

- 1. The superintendent promotes a culture of accountability for student learning with administrators and teachers.**
  - A.** The superintendent's promotion of a culture of accountability began with a thorough review of the state of education in Webster that commenced upon her appointment in 2017.
    1. The review culminated in a report to the school committee in March of 2108 entitled Entry Findings.
    2. This report specified several clear areas of need that were important to the establishment of a culture of accountability for student learning.
      - a. The report cited the district's absence of a cohesive pre-K–12 curriculum.
      - b. The report also acknowledged the absence of common district assessments of student learning.
      - c. Finally, the report contained an unvarnished specification and acknowledgement of the significant student learning gaps present in the district, among other challenges.
  - B.** The superintendent set clear expectations for district leaders at the start of the 2018–2019 school year.
    1. A review of information provided to leaders at the District Leadership Team Summer Summit details a set of clear expectations for district leaders and principals about school management, communication, and safety.
    2. Principals are required to submit a monthly report that documents their adherence to key expectations cited in the document.
  - C.** Principals acknowledged a culture of accountability in the district.
    1. Principals told the team about the emergence of a culture of accountability in the district.
      - a. Principals spoke of a clear change of direction in the district that was marked by a sense of urgency and an emphasis on high expectations for adult performance.
      - b. Principals uniformly spoke of the expectation that their school should be accountable for the education of all students.
  - D.** School committee members praised the superintendent for her direct acknowledgement of the challenges that the district faces and her aggressive pursuit of solutions to these challenges.

**Impact:** The establishment of a culture of accountability that holds educators responsible for improved student performance provides a solid foundation for district and school improvement.

### ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district has not developed a focused approach to improvement planning that is marked by targeted planning, a collaborative learning culture, and a shared understanding and commitment to the district’s mission and strategies.**

**A.** The district has not developed a coherent set of planning documents that systematically guide district and school improvement.

1. The district is using the Webster Public Schools Instructional Strategies document as its District Improvement Plan.
  - a. This plan captures the district’s vision, mission, core beliefs, and key initiatives.
  - b. The plan does not include meaningful benchmarks, timelines, or other accountability measures that help ensure that the work will be understood and completed by the responsible parties.
  - c. Key initiatives listed in the document appear to be desired aspirations as opposed to realistic outcomes that can be implemented under current conditions in the district.
    - i. For example, the document states that the district will provide actionable daily feedback to teachers. Principals stated that they struggled to get into classrooms because of school climate issues and teachers said that they seldom received feedback from evaluators.
2. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) do not uniformly contain measurable benchmarks.
  - a. The Park Avenue Elementary School, which has completed the School Redesign Grant process, has a SIP that contains initiatives that are measured by clear benchmarks.
  - b. At the time of the onsite in March 2019, the improvement plans at Webster Middle School and Bartlett High School were still in the development stage. Interviews with the superintendent and school committee members and a review of the minutes of school committee meetings indicated that the school committee reviewed draft improvement plans for the middle and high schools, and recommended that they be revised to include measurable outcomes and strategies to monitor progress.
3. District and school leaders acknowledged the importance of detailed planning documents.

- a. During several interviews, the superintendent acknowledged that the district’s planning process could be improved.
  - b. At the same time, she pointed to considerable improvements that have taken place in the district under her leadership and expressed confidence that the relatively disparate elements of planning in the district would come together in the 2019–2020 year.
  - c. Interviewees stated that the Webster Public Schools Instructional Strategies document had little strategic impact and the middle and high school improvement plans could be improved.
- B.** The district has not used its planning process to develop a collaborative learning culture and a shared understanding of the district’s vision.
1. Teachers and students expressed concern that collaboration about key district initiatives and solutions to challenges was absent.
    - a. When asked about their role as school leaders, teachers in one school stated that plans were often written for them and that most initiatives came from the top down.
    - b. Teachers in two focus groups told the review team that their ideas to address school challenges were not valued by school leaders.
    - c. High-school students told the review team that they believed that their thoughts on school improvement were solicited and then ignored by administrators.
  2. The intensity and complexity of the challenges faced by school leaders has contributed to what has been perceived by some stakeholders as an absence of collaboration.
    - a. While expressing her desire to establish a collaborative culture and citing examples of her involvement of teachers in key decisions, the superintendent acknowledged that the district has moved quickly on several fronts including curriculum, instruction, and student safety.
    - b. Principals stated that at the time of their recent hiring vital operational systems such as teacher and student schedules were not in place and had to be organized and implemented without the benefit of teacher input.
    - c. A key member of the school committee told the review team that while getting teachers’ support was important, implementing needed changes in the district should take precedence.
  3. The district’s approach to planning and the perceived absence of collaboration have compromised the district’s ability to create a sense of shared mission.

- a. School leaders and teachers told the review team that district planning documents did not inform their work or provide a meaningful sense of direction.
- b. School principals, while acknowledging the complexity of the district's challenges and the resulting sense of urgency, noted that the district's current approach was not focused.
- c. Teachers told the review team that the perceived absence of teacher voice has led to their reluctance to volunteer to provide input to school leaders and to serve on important school improvement committees.

**Impact:** Without tightly aligned district and school plans with clear, measurable benchmarks, a collaborative learning culture, and a shared understanding of the district's vision and mission, the district's efforts to improve student achievement may miss their intended mark.

### ***Recommendation***

- 1. The district should build upon its emerging culture of accountability by ensuring that its District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans include measurable benchmarks, clear timelines, and regular cycles of review and modification. The district's planning documents should be developed with the benefit of widespread input from stakeholders.**
  - A.** The district should establish procedures that integrate key planning initiatives that are underway in the district.
    1. The district should develop a District Improvement Plan that serves as the basis for school improvement planning.
    2. School Improvement Plans, including turnaround plans, should be aligned with the district's plan.
  - B.** The district should develop plans that include clear and measurable benchmarks for both student achievement and teacher performance.
    1. Plan goals should be based on analysis of historical, longitudinal and current disaggregated student data and should be in SMART goal format.<sup>1</sup>
    2. Principals, in collaboration with school councils, should ensure that each School Improvement Plan (SIP) includes specific student-focused goals to determine the progress of school-based initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> SMART goals are Specific and Strategic; Measurable; Action Oriented; Rigorous, Realistic, and Results Focused; and Timed and Tracked.

3. Changes in adult behavior and performance that are vital to the implementation of planned initiatives should also be benchmarked.
- C. District and school leaders should provide frequent, timely, and thorough information to the school committee, staff, students, families, and community on progress toward the achievement of plan goals.
1. The district and its schools should establish structures, procedures and protocols to review benchmarks on a regular basis.
  2. The district should consider using elements of its existing management and meeting structure to review plan progress on a regular basis. Leadership, Instructional Leadership Teams, department and faculty meetings provide important opportunities to review benchmark data. Using routine structures in this way will help to create powerful habits associated with accountability and reflection in the district.
  3. The district should consider using classroom walkthroughs to capture trends associated with desired teacher performance and to assess the impact of professional development efforts.
  4. The superintendent and the school committee should consider aligning some goals in the Superintendent's Educator Plan (as part of the district's educator evaluation system) with the goals in the DIP.
- D. The planning initiatives described above should have the benefit of input from students, students' families, and teachers.
1. The district should make every effort to solicit parent voice through School Improvement Councils and other means, such as surveys of the school community.
  2. Authentic and meaningful participation of teachers in key plan development and revision activities is vital to the establishment of a shared vision and a commitment to improved performance.

**Benefits:** By developing, communicating, and using measurable benchmarks that are focused on student outcomes, and based on disaggregated student achievement data and other data sources, the district will ensure that it is focused on the most important areas for improvement. By making a commitment to the yearly amount of change that it plans to achieve, the district will be able to plan and regularly monitor the impact of key improvement strategies, instructional practices, and the use of resources on student performance, opportunities, and outcomes. Widespread participation in both plan development and the frequent and open review of progress reinforce the understanding of the district's mission by stakeholders.

**Recommended resources:**

- DESE's *Planning for Success* tools (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/>) support the improvement planning process by spotlighting practices, characteristics, and behaviors that support effective planning and implementation and meet existing state requirements for improvement planning.
- *Focused Planning for Accelerating Student Learning* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dsac/focused-planning.pdf>) provides guidance for Level 3 districts to accelerate achievement for all students through the development of a focused, actionable and sustainable Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP).
- *District Accelerated Improvement Planning - Guiding Principles for Effective Benchmarks* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/turnaround/level-4-guiding-principles-effective-benchmarks.pdf>) provides information about different types of benchmarks to guide and measure district improvement efforts.
- *What Makes a Goal Smarter?* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/resources/presentations/SMARTGoals/Handout5.pdf>) is a description of SMART goals with accompanying examples. The handout was designed to support educators in developing goals as part of the educator evaluation system, but could also be a useful reference for the district as it develops or refines its DIP and SIPs.



## Curriculum and Instruction

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In response to the district and each of its schools having been identified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as requiring assistance or intervention in the form of focused/targeted support,<sup>2</sup> the district has embarked on a three-year process for curriculum renewal (September 2018—June 2021). The district is renewing its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of a high-quality, aligned curriculum that meets Massachusetts grade-level standards. Toward that end, the district has developed an inclusive process for the development of scope and sequence documents and the adoption of new curriculum materials. The district’s written scope and sequence documents are aligned with the current Massachusetts frameworks, and a common template is intended to be completed throughout the school system. Some units in core subjects are not complete, including the specific references to differentiation and accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners (ELs).

At the time of the review in March 2019, the district had recently adopted a number of curriculum programs.<sup>3</sup> Given the newly adopted curricula in the district, the district has not achieved vertical alignment of curricula, either within schools or between schools and across grade spans. Two district administrators and the three school principals are responsible for curriculum delivery. District curriculum directors, principals, content-team leaders, grade-level leaders, and instructional leadership teams provide guidance to teachers for the implementation of curriculum in each school.

Throughout the district, cohesive systems to ensure effective instruction are not consistently implemented. Instructional leadership teams (ILTs) were implemented as part of the turnaround process that began in 2016 when the district and each of its schools was identified by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as requiring assistance or intervention in the form of focused/targeted support.<sup>4</sup> Principals reported feeling challenged to find the time required for frequent classroom visits and teacher feedback. Turnaround documents discuss walkthroughs and peer observations, but these practices are not consistently practiced.

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<sup>2</sup> The district was identified as requiring assistance or intervention for low assessment participation rates for Asian students and English learners (ELs) and former ELs. The Park Avenue Elementary School was identified as requiring assistance or intervention for low assessment participation rates for ELs and former ELs, and the Webster Middle School for low assessment participation rates for students with disabilities and ELs and former ELs. Bartlett High School was identified as requiring focused/targeted support because it was among the lowest performing 10 percent of schools and because it had low student group performance for White students, economically disadvantaged students, and high-needs students.

<sup>3</sup> Programs in either their first or second year of implementation include: Looney Math Consulting and Coaching for Math (K–12), College Prep Math (9–12), *Ready Math*, *iReady Instruction for Math* (K–8), *iReady Diagnostic* for ELA and Math (K–12), StemScopes (5–8), StudySync (6–8), and Wonders Reading (K–5).

<sup>4</sup> The elementary school is operating under a DESE-approved turnaround plan; it includes benchmarks, deadlines, specific prescriptions and expectations for curriculum, and in particular, teacher collaboration and improved instructional practice. At the time of the onsite in March 2019, the district planned to implement a comparable plan at the high school in 2019–2020.

## ***Strength Findings***

**1. The district developed and implemented a collaborative process to review and adopt new curriculum materials for K–8 and high-school mathematics. As a result, all math teachers now have access to standards-aligned curricular and assessment materials.**

- A. Interviews with principals and curriculum directors and a document review indicated that a new high school math curriculum was adopted in response to analysis of student MCAS performance.
- B. When asked about the impetus of the curriculum renewal initiative, principals stated that the superintendent brought consistency to the schools, expectations for rigor and standards, and urgency.
- C. Teachers, principals, and administrators worked together to consider specific district needs and relevant research to select new math programs.
  - 1. The teachers' collective bargaining agreement stipulates a collaborative process for the adoption of new texts. Teachers and administrators reviewed several math programs, including Agile Mind, CPM, EngageNY, Illustrative Math, McGraw-Hill Glencoe, McGraw-Hill *MY Math*, Ready Math, and Z Learn.
  - 2. Teachers and administrators conducted meetings and site visits, and they applied rubrics and referred to EdReports curriculum reviews to assess each option and reach districtwide consensus.
  - 3. They selected Ready Math Instruction K–8 and College Prep Math 9–12.
- D. The district provides teachers with support for the curriculum decisions through multi-year contracts with educational consultants.
  - 1. The district has hired outside consultants to provide two years of coaching for Ready Math K–8 and four years of coaching for College Preparatory Math, grades 9–12.

**Impact:** By recognizing an area of need and responding by convening a diverse team to review, recommend, and adopt math curriculum materials, the district has made a strong start to ensure consistent standards-aligned math curricula that prepare all students for success in college and careers.

**2. In most observed classrooms districtwide, established routines and positive supports to ensure appropriate student behavior and a positive classroom climate were firmly in place.**

- A. In observed classrooms, review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that classroom routines, rituals, and responses were in place to ensure that students behaved appropriately (characteristic #11) in 94 percent of elementary classrooms, in 67 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 75 percent of high-school classrooms.

1. Elementary teachers circulated, clarified, encouraged, and gave gentle reminders to redirect students. Students raised their hands to participate, worked in groups, and made smooth transitions from one segment of the lesson to the next.
  2. In observed middle-school classes, teachers used classroom management techniques such as redirecting students back to lesson activities to prevent disruptions. Individual folders for assignments, effective integration of Chromebooks, and students taking collective responsibility in their group work appeared to be well-established routines. Teachers checked regularly on the progress of individuals and student groups.
  3. In observed classrooms at the high school, routines were in place for group work, and students were attending to their teachers and working on the lesson. Teachers checked regularly on the progress of individuals and student groups.
- B.** Observers saw sufficient and compelling evidence that the classroom climate was conducive to teaching and learning (characteristic # 12) in 94 percent of elementary classrooms, in 88 percent of middle-school classrooms, and in 76 percent of high-school classrooms.
1. In these classrooms, students and teachers showed respectful and sometimes warm relationships characterized by active listening and polite exchanges.
    - a. In elementary lessons, team members found that students knew how to work effectively in groups, and seemed comfortable contributing and asking questions.
    - b. In middle- and high-school lessons, observers saw structured, respectful relationships, and a respectful environment. Students worked independently in small groups.

**Impact:** Consistent, supportive routines and respectful relationships foster a classroom climate that provides opportunities for all students to learn collaboratively in diverse groups. Clear expectations and structures support teaching and learning and students' taking responsibility for that learning.

### ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

- 3. Students from historically marginalized groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, do not have equitable access to advanced coursework, and they remain under-enrolled in accelerated learning pathways and Advanced Placement courses.**
  - A.** The district leadership team recognized that equity of student access to course work was an issue in the district.
    1. On the district's self-assessment, submitted in advance of the onsite, the district rated equity of access as "Not at All Well" described by the indicator "Students from historically

marginalized groups, including students of color, those receiving special education services, and economically disadvantaged students have access to advanced coursework. They also have access to instruction in areas not subject to statewide testing.” Possible ratings are “Very Well,” “Well,” “Somewhat Well,” and “Not at All Well.”

2. The superintendent told the review team that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) asked the district to look at equity and student groups. Further, she stated that the district leadership team met last summer to discuss unconscious bias.
- B.** Interviews with administrators and a document review indicated that the district’s primary accelerated learning pathway, Nichols Honors Academy, limited acceptance and participation to those who meet specific academic criteria by passing an entry exam at the end of grade 8.
1. Administrators stated that Nichols was similar to having students apply to a higher level of coursework and only the top 25 percent had access to accelerated learning at Nichols.
  2. Administrators stated that admission to Nichols was “all or nothing,” i.e., students could not opt into classes unless they have been accepted fully into the program.
  3. According to district data, at the time of the onsite in March 2019, African American, Asian, and Hispanic students made up 13.6 percent of enrollment at Nichols, compared to more than 32 percent of district enrollment. Enrollment at Nichols does not include students with individualized education programs (IEPs) or English learners. Two students at Nichols are served by Section 504 accommodation plans.
- C.** According to DESE data, there are substantial gaps between the number of students in different groups who take advanced placement (AP) exams, indicating inequitable access and support.
1. For example, in 2018, Hispanic/Latino students comprised 25.4 percent of the district’s enrollment, but represented only 7.2 percent of the district’s total number of AP test takers.
  2. In 2018, 60.9 percent of the district’s students were White, but 79.2 percent of advanced placement test takers were White.
  3. In 2018, 53.1 percent of students enrolled in the district were economically disadvantaged, but only 23.4 percent of students taking AP tests were economically disadvantaged.

**Impact:** Without ensuring that all students have equitable access to rigorous coursework and advancement opportunities with high-quality teaching and learning, the district is challenged to close achievement gaps for historically marginalized students and to prepare all students for college, careers, and civic involvement.

**4. In observed classrooms, the quality of instruction was inconsistent across the district with a higher quality of instruction at the elementary school than at the middle and high schools.**

**A. Focus Area #1, Learning Objectives & Expectations** Observers noted inconsistencies in how well teachers ensured that students understood what they should be learning in the lesson and why. The review team also observed inconsistencies in how well lesson activities matched learning objectives and how frequently or effectively teachers checked for student understanding, provided feedback, and adjusted instruction.

1. Observers found sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers ensured that students understood what they were learning and why (characteristic #2) in 94 percent of elementary lessons, in only 46 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 68 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. In elementary classes, team members observed lesson framing that featured guided questions and reading comprehension goals. Teaching strategies included group work, sequencing, effective use of wait time, poster creation, and notes from student discussions.
  - b. In observed middle-school classes, although the team observed students working both independently and in groups, in some instances, student groups did not have assigned roles, which impeded progress on their assignment. In other cases, the cognitive demand was high, but inadequate scaffolding caused students to hesitate as they began their work or students lost their focus mid-way.
  - c. Many high-school teachers posted objectives on the board, but they did not consistently explain what students would learn or why the objective was important.
2. Review team members observed sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher used classroom activities well matched to lesson objectives in both content and cognitive demand (characteristic #3) in 88 percent of elementary lessons, in 67 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 75 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. Elementary lesson activities included iReady, read aloud, small-group and large-group work, academic discourse (turn and talk), technology infusion, video, singing, oral reading, science graphing, and opinion-letter writing.
  - b. In observed classrooms at the middle school, team members observed various classroom strategies matched to lesson objectives at varying levels of success. A science class featured a hands-on lesson/demonstration where students measured the time and distance. In an ELA class, an assignment was seen as a challenging activity, but had a low level of demand for mastery.
  - c. The team observed a number of high-school lessons where students worked in groups to complete assigned tasks, but this approach was inconsistent in its implementation. In a

math class, students' group problem solving was efficient, but there was little or no evidence of increased understanding of math concepts.

3. Observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers skillfully and consistently checked for student understanding and adjusted teaching (characteristic #4) in 94 percent of elementary lessons, in 67 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 69 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. Elementary school teachers conducted checks for student understanding frequently and through a variety of means and some teachers asked students to agree or disagree with a classmate's response.
  - b. The team observed middle-school teachers checking for understanding by circulating among student groups, monitoring students' academic discourse, clarifying students' thinking, and asking thought-provoking questions. In some cases, teachers modified previously presented information in response to student questions or students' confusion. In other cases, teachers spent extended time with just one or two groups (or individuals), which resulted in other groups going off task.
  - c. In many observed classrooms at the high school, teachers checked for understanding by circulating among groups of students. They offered encouragement and positive reinforcement. They also provided clarifying details and asked questions to stretch student learning. In classrooms where students were practicing academic discourse by making individual or group presentations, teachers often asked follow-up questions and probed for depth of understanding. In some observed classes, though, teachers answered their own questions or students would have benefitted from additional wait time.

**B. Focus Area #2, Student Engagement & Higher-Order Thinking** Observers noticed inconsistencies in student engagement and evidence of rigorous thinking in lessons. Specifically, teachers did not always provide students with opportunities to assume responsibility for their learning, engage in higher-order thinking, communicate their ideas with each other, or engage with meaningful real-world tasks.

1. Observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that students have opportunities to assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson content (characteristic #5) in 94 percent of elementary lessons, in 54 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 46 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. In elementary classes, student ownership and engagement took many forms. At a teacher table in kindergarten ELA, students completed a picture walk. In grade 2, Buddy readings and "turn and talks" encouraged academic discourse as students shared their understandings with each other.

- b. Most middle-school students were given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning across all disciplines by practicing academic discourse in their group work. Some students were engaged in independent work. In other classes, the lesson was missing supports for students to succeed or student groups were off task.
    - c. Some high-school students were given opportunities to take responsibility for their learning across all disciplines by practicing academic discourse in their group work. The team observed engaged student groups across all disciplines. However, the team also observed frequent examples of traditional whole-group instruction with the teacher as the presenter.
  2. Review team members noted sufficient and compelling evidence that students engaged in higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis, problem-solving evaluation, or application of new knowledge (characteristic #6) in 63 percent of elementary-school lessons, in 33 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 37 percent of high-school lessons.
    - a. At the elementary school, in a grade 4 ELA lesson in which students engaged in higher-order thinking, the teacher prompted the class to arrive at several definitions for the same word. In addition, a grade 4 math vocabulary lesson required students to call upon content from previous classes and connect that prior learning to a lesson about parallels and congruence.
    - b. At the middle school, in an ELA class focusing on a novel, students were asked to discuss how the author used technical language and how that language serves the narrative. In contrast, in a lesson designed to show students how to locate and evaluate sources, there was no discussion about why blog posts and advertisements would not be considered reliable sources.
    - c. Similarly, at the high school, in classrooms where group work was taking place, the academic discourse did not always reflect expectations for higher-order thinking.
  3. Observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that students communicated their ideas and thinking on lesson content with each other (characteristic #7) in 75 percent of elementary lessons, in 46 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 56 percent of high-school lessons.
    - a. A grade 3 ELA lesson called for a discussion of quality and quantity. In a grade 4 math vocabulary lesson, the teacher helped to lead a discussion with an effective question and answer session.
    - b. At the middle school, students in a grade 6 math class demonstrated academic discourse as they worked in small groups or pairs. Science students shared ideas about the parts of a cell. In an ELA class, students discussed figurative language and personification.

- c. At the high school, the team observed students communicating their ideas on lesson content with each other as they worked in groups or made presentations to their peers. In many observed lessons, however, the interactions took place between the teacher and the students (teacher-centered) rather than between and among students (student-centered).
  4. Observers noted sufficient and compelling evidence that students engaged in meaningful, real-world tasks (characteristic #8) in 75 percent of elementary lessons, in 62 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 63 percent of high-school lessons.
    - a. Middle-school students made text-to-life links. In one ELA class, books were selected that relate to survival, of which two were about the immigrant experience.
    - b. In a less effective high school math lesson, the teacher missed opportunities to connect slope applications to real-life situations.

**C. Focus Area #3, Inclusive Practice & Classroom Culture** Observers found teachers did not consistently engage students in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs. Teachers also did not consistently use a variety of instructional strategies in response to students' needs. Differentiation is included in the district's documentation for professional development, yet the review team saw inconsistent implementation across the district.

1. Review team members found sufficient and compelling evidence that the teacher ensured that students engaged in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs (characteristic #9) in 94 percent of elementary lessons, in 67 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 69 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. In elementary-school classes, teachers encouraged participation by all students. In a grade 4 math vocabulary lesson on parallels and congruency, the teacher worked with a student to check for understanding, and then asked the student to explain the adjacent term and provide an example.
  - b. A grade 6 math teacher directed students to provide peer support. In a grade 5 ELA lesson on reading, students conducted partnered reading and individual reading based on students' needs.
  - c. In a high-school science class, five students took a quiz with the special education co-teacher, who helped students as needed with reading the quiz questions.
2. The team noted sufficient and compelling evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies (characteristic #10) in 88 percent of elementary lessons, in only 29 percent of middle-school lessons, and in 50 percent of high-school lessons.
  - a. Elementary teachers used multiple strategies most frequently. Often, teachers employed a combination of turn-and-talk, small-group, individual, and whole-group instruction. For



example, in a grade 2 reading lesson, the team observed small groups, pairs, learning buddies, and the use of manipulatives.

- b. At the middle school level, even though small groups were observed in many lessons, students generally all worked on the same assignments for the entire class period.
- c. In a high-school math class in which the teacher did not use a variety of instructional strategies, the teacher circulated to all student groups equally as needed. In many observed high-school lessons, students worked in groups on the same activity, or the teacher presented the lesson to the whole class.

**Impact:** When high-quality, research-based instructional practices are not established and consistently applied at all levels, the district cannot ensure that students are prepared for academic work at the next level of their schooling and for college, careers, and civic participation after high school.

## ***Recommendations***

### **1. The district should ensure that all students, including students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, have equitable access to accelerated learning pathways and advanced courses.**

- A.** At all levels, the district should foster a school climate that ensures expectations for high achievement by all students and ensure that the rigorous standards reflected in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks are effectively implemented in classrooms so that all students are prepared for and have equitable access to accelerated coursework and economically viable career pathways.
  1. The district should ensure that the Nichols Honors Academy better reflects the demographics of the district's student population.
  2. Beginning in middle school, the district should conduct outreach to students and families of underrepresented groups to ensure that they are aware of the various types of advanced coursework the district offers.
- B.** The district should review and revise the process for placing students in groups for specific instructional purposes and should systematically identify and correct the barriers in the district and its schools that have led to disparities in learning opportunities for students of historically marginalized groups, including students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.
  1. The district should examine closely the impact of grouping decisions, particularly rigid grouping practices, that result in a lack of student achievement.

2. District leaders should eliminate grouping practices that result in persistent underachievement or poor performance by students and ensure that sufficient structures and academic supports are in place to ensure positive outcomes for historically marginalized students in rigorous coursework and accelerated pathways.
3. The district should identify successful instructional practices and expectations for student learning from accelerated programs and incorporate them into other courses.
4. The district should provide adequate instructional supports to ensure students' success as they enter more rigorous programs and acquire more complex knowledge.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will allow the district to fulfill its responsibility to close opportunities-for-learning gaps and provide a system for more equitable access to rigorous academic coursework that will help all students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be engaged and become productive members of society.

**Recommended resources:**

- Professional development case studies (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/CaseStudies/>) highlight districts implementing meaningful professional development programs that support educators throughout the entire career continuum. Watch examples of PD programs that are job-embedded, teacher-led, data-driven, and aligned to educator and district needs.

The Lexington Public Schools cases study addresses equity as an integral part of the school's goal to close student group gaps and ensure achievement for all students.

The Easthampton case study addresses instilling a growth mindset. It also includes a classroom observation form designed to document teachers' use of complex tasks during instruction.

- *SCALING UP: Reform Lessons for Urban Comprehensive High Schools* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/research/reports/scaling-reform-lessons-urban-comprehensive-high-schools>) synthesizes the existing research and provides examples and lessons about the implementation and efficacy of three interrelated reform elements:
  - Personalizing the learning environment;
  - Building teacher capacity; and
  - Setting and meeting high expectations for all students.
- My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/mycap/>) is a student-centered, multi-year planning tool designed to provide students with ongoing opportunities to plan for their academic, personal/social and career success.
- Turnaround Practices in Achievement Gain Schools Video Series (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/howitworks/achievement-gains.html>) The work of

Achievement Gain schools is highlighted in this video series. In each video, the school staff and leadership tell their unique turnaround story through the framework of Massachusetts [Turnaround Practices](#) research.

**2. The district should ensure that school leaders implement practices to monitor and improve instruction.**

**A.** The district should establish structures for reflection specifically focused on instructional effectiveness to engage teachers in instructional improvement and to ensure more purposeful teacher collaboration.

1. Principals and teachers should collaborate to identify and prioritize elements of practice for teachers to investigate and improve, ideally based on the results of learning walks and peer observations.

**B.** To clarify meaning and better calibrate ratings on the district’s instructional inventory, the review team recommends that the district develop descriptors for each element in the instructional inventory rubric.

1. DESE defines descriptors as “observable and measurable statements of educator actions and behaviors” aligned to each element in the rubric.<sup>5</sup>

**C.** Teachers should receive appropriate guidance and feedback as they implement the district’s instructional expectations.

1. Professional development should focus on elements of the instructional expectations as applied to the specific criteria that teachers and students work with every day.
2. Principals and other instructional leaders should ensure that teachers have the information and support necessary to meet the district’s expectations for instruction.
3. The district should continue to provide teachers with frequent and high-quality feedback<sup>6</sup> that helps them to improve instruction.

**Benefits:** Implementing this recommendation will ensure a more coordinated and results-oriented process to monitor and improve instructional practice. Descriptors can identify the expected level of teaching for each indicator so that observers’ ratings can be well calibrated, and teachers will understand more clearly the district’s expectations for high-quality teaching. In undertaking these practices, the district can better ensure that students will have access to more engaging, rigorous, and meaningful teaching and learning.

**Recommended resources:**

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<sup>6</sup> High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable.

- DESE's *Online Calibration Training Platform* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/calibration/>) uses videos of classroom instruction to simulate brief, unannounced observations. Groups of educators, such as a district leadership team, watch a video together and then individually assess the educator's practice related to specific elements from the Model Classroom Teacher Rubric and provide the educator with written feedback. Through real-time data displays, the group members can then see how their conclusions compare to each other, as well educators throughout the state.
- DESE's *Calibration Video Library* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/calibration/>) is a collection of professionally created videos of classroom instruction produced by the School Improvement Network. These videos depict a range of practice (this is NOT a collection of exemplars) to support within-district calibration activities that promote a shared understanding of instructional quality and rigor.
- OPTIC: Online Platform for Teaching and Informed Calibration (<http://www.ma-optic.com/>) is a professional development tool supporting Massachusetts educators to refine a shared understanding of effective, standards-aligned instructional practice and high quality feedback.
- DESE's "*What to Look For*" *Observation Guides* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/>) describe what observers should expect to see in a classroom at a particular grade level in a specific subject area. This includes the knowledge and skills students should be learning and using (as reflected in state learning standards) and best practices related to classroom curriculum, instruction, and assessment for each subject area.
- DESE's *Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/accountability/tools-and-resources/district-analysis-review-and-assistance/learning-walkthrough-implementation-guide.html>) is a resource to support instructional leaders in establishing a *Learning Walkthrough* process in a school or district. It is designed to provide guidance to those working in an established culture of collaboration as well as those who are just beginning to observe classrooms and discuss teaching and learning in a focused and actionable manner. (The link above includes a presentation to introduce Learning Walkthroughs.)
- Appendix 4, *Characteristics of Standards-Based Teaching and Learning: Continuum of Practice* (<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/dart/walkthrough/continuum-practice.pdf>) is a framework that provides a common language or reference point for looking at teaching and learning.

## Assessment

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### ***Contextual Background***

Responsibilities for the collection, use, and sharing of assessment data in the district are managed by instructional leadership teams (ILTs) in each school and at the district level. The ILT structure was established as part of the turnaround process begun in 2016 when the district and each of its schools was identified by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as requiring assistance or intervention in the form of focused/targeted support (see the Curriculum and Instruction standard above). Each ILT meets periodically to address curriculum, instruction, and assessment issues, including the review and analysis of state and local assessment results. In addition to the MCAS assessment, the district administers iReady benchmark assessments in ELA and math three times per year K–12 as well as DIBELS for ELA K–4. Although the iReady implementation represents an effective practice, a concern the team noted is that the district does not have procedures in place to determine whether common assessments drawn from curriculum materials complement or are aligned with iReady assessments. Instructional leaders said that iReady items were not available for review, so teachers did not know what concepts or skills were being tested.

At the elementary school, grade-level teams meet bi-weekly to review the results of common assessments, modify instructional groupings and monitor students' ongoing needs, with varying levels of effectiveness across the grade levels. Middle-school teachers meet with their grade-level colleagues as well as their content-area leaders to review the results of benchmark and common assessments and develop action plans for individual students or adjust strategies to better address identified gaps. Similarly, high-school teachers meet with department coordinators for each content area to review the results of common assessments and MCAS assessments to identify and address students' challenges. The district has provided some training to teachers and instructional leaders in the analysis of reports provided by the newly adopted iReady assessment. Teachers said in interviews that they need additional opportunities to improve their skill in making use of assessment information to improve teaching and learning.

The middle and high schools use PowerSchool to store classroom grades and assignments but does not have a centralized database to house a comprehensive profile of student performance over time and across the full program of studies. While PowerSchool offers the advantage of convenient access to some student information by families, students, and teachers, the district has not established systems that offer efficient access to a comprehensive range of student information crucial to inform instructional and program decisions. Nor does the district have defined procedures for regularly reviewing outcome, access, and opportunity data across all academic programs. While classroom teachers employ varied approaches to communicate students' performance and progress with families, including report cards and interim reports, PowerSchool, and Class Dojo, the district has not provided families with guidance on using each of these tools to support their children's success.

## ***Strength Finding***

### **1. The district has put into use a common benchmark assessment K–12 that is aligned across grade levels and provides a uniform measure of students’ academic performance and progress.**

#### **A. The iReady assessment was put into use K–12 for the 2018–2019 school year.**

1. District leaders researched benchmark assessment options and presented a profile of each across multiple indicators to the instructional staff in spring 2018. District leaders surveyed staff to gather input before making a final selection. Three options were presented to teachers.
2. District leaders provided training for teachers in the use of the iReady assessment at the start of the 2018–2019 school year.
3. Teachers, instructional leaders, and district administrators stated that teachers were expected to use iReady data to inform their instructional decisions and classroom practices.

#### **B. At the elementary school, the iReady assessment is used as both a diagnostic and a benchmark measure of students’ academic performance.**

1. Elementary teachers meet regularly with the interventionists in their school to use the diagnostic elements of the iReady assessment to group students for classroom instruction.
  - a. Interventionists in the elementary school meet with grade-level teams to review assessment results, identify groups of students with similar learning needs, and select instructional approaches suited to those needs.
  - b. The iReady assessment provides diagnostic reports by individual, classroom, and grade level showing specific skills gaps within the ELA or math content area.
2. In their grade-level teams, elementary teachers and interventionists monitor students’ progress at each subsequent iReady benchmark to assess whether instruction has met student’s needs and to revise their approaches if indicated.
  - a. Elementary teachers said that they were beginning to create individual Student Success Plans based on iReady assessment results.

#### **C. The iReady assessment enables the district to collect uniform data K–12, which school leaders and district staff can use to monitor and refine the academic program.**

1. The district completed two academic benchmarks using iReady in 2018–2019.
  - a. Teachers in the elementary and middle schools reviewed iReady and MCAS assessment results to determine whether the two assessments identified the same strengths and needs for students.

- b. At the high school, ELA and math department leaders collect iReady results.

**Impact:** With a uniform benchmark assessment in place, district leaders have taken a first step toward establishing a coherent approach to data collection across all schools. A common assessment tool offers the potential for tracking student academic performance and progress across grade levels, which would enable school and district staff to compile a profile of students' performance over time. In addition, use of a uniform measure of academic performance likely gives district leaders critical information they can use to assess the effectiveness of newly adopted curricula.

### ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**2. The district has not established systems for the efficient and purposeful analysis and use of data from a variety of assessments to guide decision making at the district, school, and classroom levels and to assess whether programs and practices are leading to improved access, opportunity, and achievement for all students.**

- A. The district has not ensured that procedures for reviewing data at the grade or classroom level are used consistently and that actions taken in response to student data are leading to improved student outcomes.
  1. The district assigns responsibility for oversight of data use practices to school leaders who rely on grade-level or content-area leaders to facilitate review of student assessment results. The district does not regularly monitor changes in teaching practice in response to student data.
  2. Principals and district leaders said principals were responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of data analysis and use.
    - a. Principals stated they did not have sufficient time to oversee the use of data by grade-level or subject-area teams regularly.
  3. Procedures for reviewing data at the classroom level vary across schools and grade levels. Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) in each school described individual approaches to using student data to inform instructional practices.
    - a. At the elementary schools, interventionists take on the role of retrieving student and classroom level iReady data and for facilitating data review during grade-level team meetings.
      - i. Instructional leaders stated that not every grade-level team participated to the same degree in data review and analysis.

- b. Middle-school grade-level and content-team leaders meet once per month with the teachers they represent and focus on student data following procedures of their own design.
  - c. Members of the high-school ILT have been required to use their monthly meeting time to develop the school turnaround plan and have not engaged in regular review of benchmark or common assessment data with the teachers they represent.
    - i. Teachers reported that some department meetings included discussion of common assessments taken from the curriculum but noted that this was not a regular practice across all departments.
    - ii. Teachers expressed concern about their loss of time for looking at student work because of schoolwide schedule changes.
4. District leaders and teachers reported that teachers monitored their own follow-through on action plans that result from data analysis meetings because school and district administrators were seldom present in classrooms to oversee changes in instruction.
5. The district receives data about changes in instructional practices collected by external consultants involved in the turnaround process in the form of a Schoolwide Instructional Observation Report (SIOR) and from the Looney math coaches. However, the changes in practice are not necessarily linked to the action plans developed by grade-level teams in response to teachers' analysis of iReady benchmark and common assessments.
- a. As a result, the Looney coach data and SIOR data do not provide district leaders with reliable information on the impact of teachers' data use on teaching practices.
6. The district does not regularly review the full range of student data, such as program enrollment, attendance, and behavior, by student group, to identify and reduce achievement, access, and opportunity gaps for various student groups.
- a. External consultants provide the district with disaggregated 2018 MCAS assessment results for economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities but the district does not regularly review opportunity data, such as program or course enrollment, by ethnicity, disability, or language challenges in similar ways.

**Impact:** Without clear and consistent practices for analyzing and using data to inform instruction and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of those charged with using data for improvement, educators cannot use collaborative inquiry effectively to use data to inform decision making at the classroom level.



**3. The district does not have an integrated data management system that provides staff, students, teachers, and students' families with assessment information that is clear, timely, and easily understood and that can be used to track students' progress and assess the effectiveness of curricula.**

**A.** Because academic data from state and local assessments and non-academic data such as behavior and attendance are collected and stored in separate databases, teachers and instructional leaders cannot retrieve a comprehensive profile of student performance.

1. iReady assessment data is stored at the individual student level, and retrieved at the student, classroom or grade level by designated staff members.
  - a. Only select high-school instructional leaders have access to certain data. Teachers wishing to review their students' historical academic performance, behavior, or attendance must reach out to the designee to acquire information.
2. At the middle and high schools, teacher upload individual student results on classroom assessments to PowerSchool.
3. Although data from common assessments taken from curriculum materials are shared by elementary and middle-school grade-level teams during common planning time, results are not collected in a central database to be used to track student progress or to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.
4. Designated staff collect, store, and retrieve non-academic data such as attendance and behavior.
  - a. The dean of students collects and retrieves attendance and behavior data. The middle and high schools shared a single dean for several months in 2018–2019.
5. Special educators store diagnostic and progress monitoring data in designated databases, and share some data with teachers and families.

**B.** The district has not provided families and students with clear and timely information to help them understand how to support their children to perform at a higher level.

1. The district assigns responsibility to schools to communicate academic performance information with families.
  - a. Elementary students receive report cards three times per year. Elementary teachers send classwork and tests home with students.
2. Middle- and high-school students receive four report cards yearly with progress reports between each. In addition, families of middle- and high-school students can access their children's grades and assignments on Power School. However, the district does not provide

guidance for families on the resources or supports they might use to help improve students' achievement.

- a. Families reported that Power School was not always current.
3. Families stated that both curriculum and assessment information provided to them was complex and not easily understood, even for parents who were educators.
- C. The district does not collect feedback from families about the usefulness of its communications about assessment results to ensure that information shared with families is helpful.
  4. Family surveys do not include questions about the quality of communication about students' academic performance and progress.
  5. Families cited communication and parent involvement as two big areas of need for the district.

**Impact:** Without an integrated and accessible system for storing and retrieving student information in an efficient and timely way, district leaders, instructional leaders, and teachers cannot make fully informed judgments about the effectiveness of the district's academic program and teachers cannot make meaningful modifications to classroom practice to improve student outcomes. When families are challenged to understand assessment information, they are limited in the support they can provide to their children.

## ***Recommendations***

1. **The district should create a culture of shared responsibility for the effective use of data to improve teaching and learning by implementing data practices that drive program and instructional decisions and by regularly and systematically monitoring their impact on student outcomes.**
  - A. The district should clarify the roles and responsibilities of team leaders and principals in analyzing data and monitoring the effectiveness of data analysis.
  - B. The district should establish and articulate expectations for the use of data analysis protocols.
    1. The district can build on practices and structures previously used by staff, such as looking at student work, tuning protocols, professional learning communities, to create its data analysis protocols.
  - C. The district should build leaders' and teachers' data analysis skills to support improvement.
  - D. The district should consider the use of an integrated and accessible student information management system to collect and store data across a range of academic and non-academic

outcomes to ensure that individual educators have easy access to all relevant data that can support classroom-level decision-making.

1. The district should ensure sufficient and sustained training for district and building staff in the management of the student information system.
  2. The district should include accessibility and usability by relevant stakeholders as core criteria in the selection or design of its data management system.
- E. The district should ensure that all schools and educators provide timely and effective information to families about their students' progress toward attaining grade-level standards.
1. Clear information should be shared with parents/guardians on a regular basis that illustrates whether students are on track to being college and career ready and that helps families to understand how to support their students to perform at a high level.

**Benefits:** Students will benefit when the district creates a culture of data-informed decision making that enables educators across the district, as well as students and their families, to understand, interpret and use data to improve student achievement. By building administrators' and staff skills in using assessment data to plan for the improvement of classroom, school, and district-level programs, the district will focus the collective efforts of all stakeholders toward preparing all Webster students to succeed in college and career and help them become contributing citizens in their community.

**Recommended resources:**

- DESE's *Assessment Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.
- DESE's *District Data Team Toolkit* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/>) is a set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a District Data Team.
- DESE's *Literacy Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis Tool* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/ddm/webinar/PartI-GapAnalysis.pdf>) is intended to support districts in understanding where their educators fit overall on a continuum of assessment literacy. After determining where the district as a whole generally falls on the continuum, districts can determine potential next steps.
- DESE's *District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)* ([www.mass.gov/ese/dart](http://www.mass.gov/ese/dart)) is organized by the District Standards and can help district leaders see where similar districts in the state are showing progress in specific areas to identify possible best practice.

## Human Resources and Professional Development

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### ***Contextual Background***

The district has documented policies and procedures for recruitment and hiring; these practices are consistent among the three schools. District leaders reported a desire to diversify their work force, but the district has not pursued sources likely to produce diverse candidates. The district has expanded its formal mentoring program to ensure that second-year teachers are supported.

The superintendent has set clear expectations for leaders' supervision and evaluation responsibilities. The district uses TeachPoint to record and track formal and informal visits, as well as formative and summative evaluations; teachers upload their evidence files to TeachPoint. The superintendent acknowledged that adherence to required timelines was a challenge for evaluators and the sample files reviewed indicated this to be true to some extent. The quality of feedback to teachers varied. Elementary teachers received the most instructive feedback. While there are two formal evaluators in each school for classroom teachers, and some district personnel evaluate some specialists or special subject teachers, the high ratio of evaluators to teachers may be a barrier to providing timely and actionable feedback. In addition, secondary principals also manage disciplinary issues. Secondary principals said that their responsibility for discipline interfered with their availability to observe and evaluate instruction.

The district has expanded opportunities for teacher leaders in the district through its school-level instructional leadership teams. Professional development (PD) has expanded with the 2018 addition of a second district-level curriculum coordinator. Turnaround plans, monitoring site visits, and analysis of student performance have helped the district to target K–12 math through the 2019–2020 school year. A newly formed PD committee has re-instituted representation from teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists and seeks input from participants following each program. The district's goal for the committee is to ensure that teachers play an active and engaged role in planning and evaluating professional development programs.

While the district has demonstrated a commitment to thoughtful PD, it has not established some important elements, including:

- Processes for using data, other than teacher survey or observational data, to formally track the impact of its professional development programs;
- Systems to promote and sustain collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to support implementation of learning; and
- Plans to differentiate PD opportunities to meet the needs of teachers outside of their content area, or for teachers who enter the district at different points in the multi-year plan.

## ***Strength Finding***

### **1. The district has recently formalized a two-year professional development plan and has begun to include teachers in its planning process.**

- A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that district curriculum coordinators have developed a two-year professional development (PD) plan that contains many elements of the Massachusetts standards for high-quality PD.
  - 1. The 2018–2020 PD Plan has goals and objectives aligned with district and school initiatives.
    - a. District leaders, principals, and members of the PD committee said that the PD plan took into account district initiatives, and school improvement and turnaround plans.
  - 2. Data from student performance on MCAS assessments analyzed in the superintendent’s March 2018 Entry Findings and findings from teachers’ PD surveys indicated that reading, writing, math, and science were areas in need of attention.
    - a. The superintendent and district curriculum coordinators said that while 2017–2018 PD focused on ELA K-5, the 2018–2020 PD Plan would focus on K–12 math instruction and content.
- B.** The district provides time, funding, and staff to assist educators in attaining PD program goals and objectives.
  - 1. The PD plan provides five full days and six half days of PD each year, each with release time provided for teachers. There are also opportunities for voluntary, paid Saturday sessions.
  - 2. Interviewees said that the PD sessions are taught by knowledgeable professionals and provide a coherent K–12 experience in core content areas. The district has contracted with outside consultants to provide a three-year program of instructional coaching and feedback to teachers at all grade levels. Principals stated that the training helped teachers to shift to a growth mindset. Teachers from the secondary level in particular viewed coaching as helpful.
    - a. Additional programs include a two-year implementation program by outside consultants for Ready Math and I-Ready Instruction K–8, and i-Ready Diagnostic for ELA and Math K–12.
- C.** School committee members noted that they supported superintendent’s commitment to ongoing support for PD because they have seen growth in test scores. They said that the superintendent included funding for PD in the 2019–2020 budget.
- D.** District leaders and teachers stated that PD was an important step in collaborating on school improvement and was having a positive impact on student learning during the 2018–2019 school year.

1. District leaders noted positive shifts in teacher practice at the elementary school, particularly in teachers' skills in engaging students. Similarly, some high-school teachers attributed an improvement in weekly student assessments to the summer and ongoing trainings. Principals at all three levels noted improvements in students' academic discourse.
- E. The 2018–2020 PD Plan provides an opportunity for district leaders and teachers to begin to work together following a period of time when there was little teacher involvement in the planning of PD programs.
1. The 2019 re-convened PD committee consists of teacher and district representatives including the superintendent, the two district curriculum coordinators, two principals, four teachers, one special education service provider, and two paraprofessionals.
  2. Before the reconvening of the PD committee, decisions about programs were made at the district level. However, recent half-day PD programming has been responsive to teachers' requests. For example, a PD committee member reported that high-school science teachers needed PD to address recent textbook updates and related technology changes and this opportunity was provided.
- F. Elementary teachers told the team that there was need for more responsive PD programming, including attention to the different skill levels of teachers in SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) training, participation of unified arts teachers in core-content courses, and advanced topics in Looney Math.
1. Principals said that teachers expressed the need for PD in classroom management, data analysis, and teaching students "who struggle with poverty."

**Impact:** Careful planning of PD, including engaging educators in the process, makes it more likely that professional growth opportunities in the district will lead to improved teacher practice and will ultimately improve students' opportunities, outcomes, and performance.

### ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

2. **The district's educator evaluation system does not prioritize opportunities for educators to receive high-quality feedback<sup>7</sup> that helps them improve their practice.**
  - A. The team reviewed the evaluative documentation of 30 randomly selected teachers from across the district as well as the evaluative documentation of 6 administrators.
    1. The district uses TeachPoint as its educator evaluation management system for teachers. TeachPoint is not used for administrator evaluations.

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<sup>7</sup> High-quality feedback is specific, timely, and actionable.

- B.** The quality of evaluator feedback for teachers varied; elementary teachers received the most instructive feedback.
  - 1. In 24 of the 30 teacher evaluations reviewed, feedback was informative. Evaluators described what they saw, including both teacher and student actions; however, evaluator judgements about lessons observed were limited.
  - 2. In contrast, in 19 of the 30 teacher evaluations reviewed, feedback included comments intended to improve instruction. Of the 19 teacher evaluations with comments intended to improve instruction, 10 were for elementary teachers.
    - a. The most effective feedback paired suggestions with direct observations. For example, evaluators who observed a great deal of teacher talk, with insufficient student talk and student-to-student discourse opportunities, suggested that teachers provide more higher-order questions that require more than a one word or phrase answer in order to add rigor to students' critical thinking and opportunities for students to use descriptive language. Elementary-level feedback referred to observed learning standards and indicators.
    - b. The least effective feedback contained narratives of the lesson observed, checkmarks on a list indicating levels of student engagement or observed teacher behaviors, and limited comments or suggestions to the teacher intended to improve instruction.
- C.** The team reviewed paper evaluative documents for five current administrators. Feedback in these evaluations was informative rather than instructive.
- D.** A document review indicated that the district provided evaluation training in August 2018 for the administrative team and the superintendent provided a comprehensive timeline with due dates for all components. The training included a review of collective bargaining agreement language, the need to prioritize teachers most in need of observation, calibration work, and providing consistent and useful feedback.
- E.** Overall implementation of the educator evaluation system has been uneven and inconsistent in both the frequency and the quality of administrator feedback. The teacher/evaluator ratio is high.
  - 1. Two of the district's three principals are new to the district, and the third is in his second year. Two of the three principals cited their involvement in daily student discipline crises as interfering with their ability to be in classrooms. Principals said that they could only be instructional leaders when they could get into classrooms.
  - 2. The teacher: evaluator ratio is 47 teachers for 2 evaluators at the high school, 53 teachers for 2 evaluators at the middle school, and 69 teachers for 2 evaluators at the elementary school. Two central office administrators also provide evaluations for special educators and a few selected staff.

- a. Although the superintendent’s 2018–2019 district initiative states, “We will provide frequent ongoing and actionable feedback to teachers regarding their practice by observing teacher and learning in the classroom on a DAILY [sic] basis,” the current system of supervision cannot sustain this goal.
  - b. The superintendent told the team that she had concerns about the district’s educator evaluation system, stating, “It’s undoable.” She noted that it was impossible to meet the mandated timelines and that evaluations were not always done on time. She stated a desire to make changes in the district’s implementation of the system.
  - c. In one teacher focus group of 19 teachers, in a show of hands, 15 teachers indicated that they had not received feedback from their evaluators during the 2018–2019 school year. In another group of six educators, only one said that they had received feedback. In a third focus group, teachers reported that a majority of teachers had not been formally observed.
3. At all three levels, the use of learning walks and peer observations for the purpose of providing teacher feedback is limited.
    - a. While turnaround action plans (TAPs) mention walk throughs and peer observations, these practices are not consistently implemented. Administrators stated that learning walks took place only when conducted with help from the Massachusetts Statewide System of Support (SSoS).

**Impact:** without high-quality (specific, timely, and actionable) feedback designed to contribute to the professional growth of teachers and administrators, the district is missing opportunities to help educators build their skills and improve students’ learning experiences and outcomes.

### ***Recommendation***

- 1. The district should promote educators’ growth by fully implementing all components of the educator evaluation system, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all educators receive high-quality feedback.**
  - A.** The district should support and monitor the skills and practices of evaluators to ensure that the feedback they provide is specific, instructive, actionable and relevant to professional growth and student outcomes.
    1. Evaluators should participate in calibration training and activities to ensure quality, accuracy, and consistency in the evaluation process and documentation.



2. The district should continue to explore models of distributed leadership, such as allocating evaluator responsibilities to a wider pool of people including other school and district administrators or teacher leaders.
- B. The district should identify opportunities to streamline the evaluation process to ensure that it is valuable to educators and supports their growth and development.
1. The district should focus evaluation processes and related goals on high priority practices aligned to school and/or district priorities.
  2. The district should explore peer review systems of evaluation.

**Benefits:** A fully implemented educator evaluation system that prioritizes high-quality feedback and is aligned with high priority school and/or district priorities will help educators improve their practice. By identifying ways to streamline the system, the district can reduce evaluator workload, provide more consistency in the provision of support and feedback, and ensure that all educators receive high-quality feedback. This will likely lead to improved instruction and increased student performance and outcomes.

**Recommended resources:**

- *On Track with Evaluator Capacity* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/resources/pln/OnTrack-EvaluatorCapacity.pdf>) is an interactive document that provides specific strategies, lessons learned, and links to district-created resources. It was produced by eight districts that were part of a Professional Learning Network for Supporting Evaluator Capacity.
- *Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/resources/QRG-Streamline.pdf>) is designed to help 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?

## Student Support

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### ***Contextual Background***

While the Webster Public Schools have seen changes in leadership roles in recent years, at the time of the onsite in March 2019 the director of student support services was in her seventh year in this role. During this period, district schools were reconfigured: grades 3 and 4 moved from Webster Middle School to Park Avenue Elementary School; grades 5 and 6 remained at the middle school; grades 7 and 8 moved from Bartlett High School to Webster Middle School. Bartlett High became a 9–12 school. Many students in the district, along with their families and caregivers, were impacted by these significant changes.

Many Webster students come to school each day with unique academic and support needs. According to DESE data, in 2018–2019, 62.3 percent of students are part of the high needs student group because they are in one or more of the following groups: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners (ELs) or former ELs. Students with disabilities represent 21.3 percent of the total student population, compared with 18.1 percent of the state; ELs make up 9.6 percent of enrollment, compared with 10.5 percent across the state; and 52.9 percent of students come from economically disadvantaged households, compared with 31.2 percent across the state. Webster staff reported that some students and their families experienced domestic violence, trauma, anxiety, emotional and behavioral regulation challenges, and/or lived in foster care.

The Park Avenue Elementary School was one of five schools in Massachusetts that initially participated in a trauma sensitive school descriptive study: the Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative (TPLI) conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Education and Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. Park Avenue’s participation took place during the same period as the district reorganization. As the school population grew and resources diminished, and once Park Avenue was designated as requiring assistance or intervention in the form of focused/targeted support, it left the study.

The district has an inclusive model of education serving students with cognitive, physical, social-emotional, and behavioral and mental health needs. In 2018–2019, 68 percent of students with disabilities are included in general education classes 80 percent of the time or more. Nineteen percent of students with disabilities are served in substantially separate settings within the schools and four percent in partial inclusion. The district seeks to provide services for students in the district, though Webster continues to experience a high number of out-of-district placements.

The district’s four-year graduation rate is below the state rate,<sup>8</sup> and the district is challenged with high out-of-school suspension and student absence rates. In 2017–2018, 40.4 percent of Webster students missed 10 days or more of school, compared with 34.1 percent statewide, and the district’s chronic

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<sup>8</sup> The district’s four-year graduation rate (2018) was 67.7 percent, compared with the state rate of 87.9 percent. In addition, only 43.8 percent of students with disabilities graduated within four years.

absence<sup>9</sup> rate was 20.3 percent, compared with the state rate of 13.2 percent. Students are also missing school by being suspended out of school. In 2017–2018, the district’s out-of-school suspension rate was 6.8 percent, compared with the state rate of 2.9 percent.<sup>10</sup>

The superintendent has focused on establishing partnerships and on creating a positive presence in the community by reaching out to businesses and agencies. Donations have been received from Mapfre, Curaleaf, Webster Food Share, and Project Bread. You, Inc. was referenced as a partner for in-school counseling support and was listed as a support in the descriptions of tiered support submitted by the elementary school. Staff reported positively on a previous partnership with Lesley College: Safe and Supportive Schools, focused on creating trauma-sensitive schools. They reported attempts to renew the relationship.

The district previously engaged with DESE through DESE’s Tier I Inclusive Academy. Webster also has participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant. When developing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant the district engaged partners including local and regional partners from the health care, safety, and other industries. The district provides tutoring for approximately 60 elementary students at North Village, a local housing development. Webster has had a long-term relationship with Mapfre Insurance, a local donor to the district.

Webster has been identified to participate in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Rethinking Discipline Professional Learning Network representing statewide cohorts of educators.<sup>11</sup> Since 2016, DESE has worked with over 30 schools/districts to provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities to assist with the reduction of inappropriate or excessive use of long-term suspension and expulsion, including disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and/or of students of color. As part of the Rethinking Discipline Initiative, districts are required to develop annual action plans.

Bartlett High School was identified for a large discipline disparity for Black/African American students.<sup>12</sup> DESE notified the Webster district that it would undertake a multi-faceted review process in coming years to “assess schools’ and districts’ progress in reducing discipline disparities and to determine whether identified schools and districts will be required by the Department to continue to develop and implement formal action plans.”

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<sup>9</sup> The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days in membership in a school. See Table 29 in the Student Performance section of this report for chronic absence rates over time, disaggregated by student group.

<sup>10</sup> See Table 25 in the Student Performance section of this report for out-of-school suspension rates over time, disaggregated by student group.

<sup>11</sup> The state law and regulations that took effect in 2014 required DESE to identify schools that suspend or expel a significant percentage of students for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year as well as schools and districts with significant disparities in suspension and expulsion rates among different racial and ethnic groups or among students with and without disabilities. See DESE’s [Student Discipline Resources and Information](#) webpage.

<sup>12</sup> Bartlett High School was identified through analysis of discipline data reported by the district/school to DESE through the annual School Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR) due each July.

In March 2019, DESE determined that Bartlett High School would still be required to develop and implement an action plan approved by DESE to address these significant disparities for the 2019–2020 school year.

### ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

**1. The district does not have a proactive approach and consistent system of support to meet the needs of all students and to ensure equitable learning experiences.**

- A.** Interviews and a document review indicated that while the district has increased staffing and improved the range and quality of academic support for all learners in the K–4 classrooms, the district has yet to articulate a coherent continuum of increasingly intense, evidence-based, culturally responsive academic, behavioral, and social emotional learning (SEL) developmentally appropriate practices delivered to all students in the regular education setting.
- B.** It has not achieved a shared understanding and articulation of a K–12 tiered academic, behavioral, and social-emotional system of support in the general education environment.
  - 1. When asked to confirm information provided by the district about multi-tiered academic, SEL, and positive behavior strategies by level, Interviewees confirmed the absence of supports across all tiers.
  - 2. At Park Avenue Elementary School, the tiered system of supports in academics reflects a blend of Tier I and Tier II instructional supports. The use of interventionists and educational support staff to complement instruction in the K–4 classrooms provides some differentiation.
  - 3. At Webster Middle School, interviewees reported that progress monitoring of tiered academic intervention was compromised and that students might be placed in an intervention for a semester or the entire school year because of middle-school scheduling practices and inadequate staffing. Staff also stated that some students were pulled out of their non-core subjects to access the intervention support.
    - i. All students are placed into groups labeled Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 based on assessment results. These groups are set and are not flexible.
  - 4. At Bartlett High School, some tiered supports are only available to students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); these include Learning Labs/Academic Support, Resource Room Mathematics, English Life Skills, and a community-based vocational program. The Tier 2 and 3 academic system of supports also include special education services. The focus of these programs overlaps.

- i. Journey, a prevention approach, is designed to target interventions for students with social-emotional, academic, and/or behavioral needs.
    - ii. STAR, a substantially separate program, is available to students with social-emotional and behavioral needs on IEPs.
    - iii. The STRONG (Success, Teamwork, Respect, Opportunity, Navigate, Growth) program provides a team approach to grade 9 students who are most at risk of dropping out.
    - iv. QUEST provides small-group instruction with a focus on academics, standardized test preparation, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and targets students at risk of dropping out.
  5. Second Step appears on the schedules for the elementary school, though various stakeholders, including elementary staff, did not identify Second Step as the social-emotional curriculum for the elementary school. Some staff said that the middle school was “looking to adopt” Second Step.
  6. District leaders and some teachers said that the district’s Student Support Team (SST) process was not well understood or implemented with fidelity districtwide. There is teacher confusion about how the SST process works in relation to a multi-tiered system of supports.
- C.** The district’s approach to positive behavior management is not fully responsive to the needs of all students.
1. In district documents, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was identified as a Tier I intervention for social-emotional and behavioral interventions. However, there was consensus in several interviews with various stakeholder groups, including parents, that PBIS was not implemented with fidelity and comprehensiveness in district schools.
    - a. Administrators and staff expressed differing views on the adoption, use, and efficacy of a K–12 PBIS model.
  2. Staff at all levels, including administrators, said that they felt overwhelmed, and many reported feeling challenged to manage students presenting with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. While a high-school document described teachers providing more positive feedback to students as a PBIS goal, staff reported that they did not receive sufficient help to understand student behavior.

**Impact:** The absence of a comprehensive, clearly understood, and implemented K–12 tiered system of supports inhibits the district from supporting and sustaining the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral growth of the diverse population of learners in Webster. Without a systematic and coherent response to the lived experiences of students, the provision of equitable opportunities to access and engage in a variety of programs and experiences is compromised. As a result, the district likely cannot realize its mission: to provide a quality education and a safe learning environment for all students.

**2. Systems to engage the district’s diverse student populations and their families and caregivers are not aligned and sufficiently robust to achieve the district’s goals.**

- A.** The superintendent acknowledged mixed beliefs and mindsets in the district about—and expectations for—family and caregiver advocacy for their children, and all children’s ability to learn and develop.
- B.** Students expressed a desire to “have pride in our school” but shared some concerns:
  - 1. Students expressed a concern about their absence of input and voice in addressing changes to a previous attendance and tardy practice they perceived to be working.
  - 2. In addition, high-school students expressed a concern that disciplinary protocols were inequitably based on race and/or identified needs of students. For example, high-school students perceived differential consequences for a student who threatened to “shoot someone” and a black student who wore a “do-rag.”
  - 3. High-school students perceived that district postings on twitter referencing successful events could mislead the community about the successes in the district.
- C.** The Webster Public Schools Instructional Strategies 2018–2019 articulates a commitment to equity and dismantling systemic inequalities and implicit bias. However, stakeholders expressed differing perspectives about the efficacy and direction of the district’s focus on equity, engagement, and access and its stated values.
  - 1. When asked about the implicit bias and equity work in focus groups, staff and families and caregivers did not have information about the initiative.
  - 2. The superintendent convened a meeting in October 2018 to form an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (EL PAC). An EL parent chair was appointed.
    - a. The group of parents requested that the district be more responsive in meeting specific needs of Spanish speaking students.
    - b. EL parents identified the need to improve access, equity, and engagement including improving cultural competencies in teachers and tools for translation, and increasing bi-lingual/EL teachers and time for students in core curriculum.
- D.** Attendance, tardiness, and discipline concerns are managed by each school. School psychologists, assistant principals, deans of students, and guidance staff were reported to assume responsibilities for following up, as they were able. These dean and guidance positions were not filled during parts of the year and staff reported being stretched too thin to consistently attend to these responsibilities.
  - 1. At the time of the onsite in March 2019, district and school leaders said that the district did not have an attendance policy.

2. The superintendent noted different consequences for similar behaviors between the middle and high schools.
- E.** Two-way communication and engagement with families varies by school and by teacher. Staff and families reported on a variety of tools used to communicate between home and school. Communications about academic performance, missing homework, and tests depend on the teacher's timely uploading of data.
1. PowerSchool was reported to have more consistent use by middle-school families and teachers than by high-school families and teachers. ClassDojo was described as used primarily at the middle school. Other teachers mentioned Google Docs and a math app, CAMI Maths, as their communication preferences.
  2. Families reported having limited face-to-face communication with teachers about curriculum and outcomes for learning.

**Impact:** Until the district's core values and beliefs about students and their families and caregivers, their diverse lifestyles, and range of developmental, social emotional and behavioral and mental health needs are embraced and mirrored in the day to day practices of the district, all students and their families, and community partners cannot be fully engaged in collaboratively informed partnership to support all students' development. Systemic barriers and cultural beliefs inhibit the ongoing development of strengths-based, culturally responsive, and collaborative systems of communication and relationships with students, their families, and community stakeholders and partners.

## ***Recommendations***

- 1. The district should develop and implement a coherent, research-based system of supports accessible to all students, including those receiving special education services.**
  - A.** A critical group of district student services personnel including school-based staff, instructional teacher leaders, math, English language arts, and Title I interventionists should be charged with undertaking a study of the best researched and evidenced based Tier 1 content-specific instructional practices. The analysis should focus on identifying a range of regular education practices that are developmentally age, grade appropriate, and aligned with the range of learners' social, emotional and behavioral needs of students in Webster.
    1. A review of the entry and exit criteria and the structure of district programs currently considered tiered supports should be undertaken with the view of determining best approaches to improve academic, social, and emotional learner outcomes.
    2. The district should work with its current content coach consultants to codify explicit tiered instructional practices by content.

3. The district should undertake a review and monitoring of the effectiveness of tiered practices. This should include a process for tracking individual, group, and aggregate data from assessments, attendance, chronic absenteeism, discipline, etc. to assess the impact of interventions, understand trends, make changes as needed, and to identify broader school improvement needs.
  4. The district should re-engage with DESE's Systems for Student Success office.
- B.** Working with staff, the district should gather input from students and families as to the strengths and weaknesses of the current implementation of PBIS. This information could be used to inform planning and next steps.
- C.** The district should design schedules and allocate resources to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to access a continuum of tiered supports, with particular attention being paid to the middle and high schools. Practices and programs under consideration should be developmentally and culturally appropriate, focusing on strengths-based systems of support, and avoid tracking students in inflexible groups.
- D.** The district should examine the range of staff understandings and fidelity of implementation within the current Student Support Team structure.
1. All staff should be supported in understanding the relationship between regular education tiered system of supports, and how the student support team functions to identify and support academic, behavior, and social emotional needs beyond the scope of regular education.
- E.** The district's work to create an inclusive district should be accompanied by a strategic approach to addressing access, equity and engagement by developing the staff's capacity to examine and dismantle implicit bias and systemic inequalities. The district should create settings where all children can learn, grow, and thrive.
- F.** At critical junctures in the process, a range of technologies and approaches should be employed to communicate with staff, students, families, partners and the community at large.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the district will likely provide more targeted classroom-based instruction and support for most learners. With a continuum of tiered supports, students' needs will be systematically addressed. This will help the district to ensure that it is challenging and supporting all students to meet Massachusetts standards and sustaining students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth.

**Recommended resources:**

- The *Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/presentations-pubs/>) is a blueprint for school improvement that focuses on systems, structures and supports across



the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. The MTSS website includes links to a self-assessment and a variety of helpful resources.

- *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* (<https://osepideasthatwork.org/evidencebasedclassroomstrategies>) summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies that can help teachers capitalize on instructional time and decrease disruptions.
  - *The Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/guidebook/>) includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion following the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.
- 2. The district should enhance its current practices to strengthen collaborative relationships with families and community partners and to ensure that family engagement practices are equitable.**
- A.** The district should establish a districtwide definition of family engagement at each level.
1. The district should ensure that family and community engagement practices and programs are aligned with district and school goals.
    - a. District leaders, students, families, and community partners should collaboratively establish family and community engagement goals that are aligned with district and school goals, and develop metrics to measure family and community engagement and its impact on student outcomes.
    - b. The district should collaboratively identify practices that reflect a strengths-based, growth-oriented, equitable, and culturally responsive set of beliefs that engage families, caregivers, and community partners. The district should communicate an appreciation for the different languages, norms, family structures, and values within the community and should continually develop its knowledge of the diverse needs of its students and families and caregivers.
    - c. Educators should regularly analyze data to evaluate family and community engagement and determine whether programs and practices should be continued, modified, or eliminated.
    - d. The district should establish and expand meaningful opportunities for family leadership, and ensure that those in leadership roles represent the community.
- B.** The district should ensure that family and community engagement practices and programs are informed by research-based practices for family and community engagement.

1. The district should ensure that family engagement practices and programs take place across a variety of settings, including homes, schools, and community spaces, libraries, after-school programs, and cultural institutions, such as museums.
  2. District leaders in collaboration with school leaders should determine ways of incorporating data sharing into family engagement practices, programs and partnerships.
  3. The district should develop districtwide strategies to engage families in transitions in their children's education (i.e., entry into pre-school, kindergarten, middle school, and high school).
- C. The district should conduct a comprehensive mapping of current and potential partners (including non-traditional such as faith-based and civic groups), and resources throughout Webster, the greater Worcester County area and beyond.
1. The district should focus on a process to find, establish, and manage partnerships and community resources to ensure that all partners enhance and strengthen specific supports and services during and after-school times.
  2. The district should make decisions about the appropriate timing to access and/or extend MA DESE 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) Out of School Time (OST) and/or Expanded Learning Time (ELT) grant processes.

**Benefit:** Implementing this recommendation will foster a strengths-based collaboration between the district and with families, students, and community partners. This will enable and empower families to be more involved in their children's development. Engagement with student, family, and community partner stakeholders will assist in reshaping a district growth mindset and assets-based identity within the community.

**Recommended resources:**

- DESE's *Family and Community Involvement* web page ([http://www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/f\\_involvement.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/FamComm/f_involvement.html)) provides several resources, including DESE's *Guide to Parent, Family, and Community Involvement*.
- The Global Family Research Project's overview of resources (<https://globalfrp.org/Articles>) includes links to several articles and videos related to empowering families in children's learning.
- *Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next-Generation Family Engagement: Engaging Families to Transform Education* (<https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Joining-Together-to-Create-a-Bold-Vision-for-Next-Generation-Family-Engagement-Engaging-Families-to-Transform-Education>) is a report from the Global Family Research Project that identifies five areas that can serve as "building blocks" for family engagement strategies and recommendations for the future of family engagement.

- DESE's *Special Education* web page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/>) includes links to guidance, legislation, and resources for parents of children with disabilities.
  - Overview, technical assistance documents: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/docs.html>
  - Overview, other parent information: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/parents.html>
- *Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/pac/>) was created to ensure that every PAC operating in the state fully understands the capacity and potential that PACs have to collaborate with the school community to influence special education programs and policies in their school districts.
- *Parents' Guides to Student Success* (<http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>) are grade-specific guides from the National PTA (available in English and Spanish) with specific descriptions for parents of what children should be learning once Common Core standards are fully implemented, along with suggestions for helping students at home and communicating with teachers.

## Financial and Asset Management

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### ***Contextual Background***

The district has a municipal budget appropriation in fiscal year 2019 of \$20,969,677 to support a K–12 district of 1,855 students. The budget is developed during the school year beginning with analysis of staffing needs by principals and directors. In consultation with those administrators, the superintendent and central office administrators develop a budget to be submitted to the school committee. From that point, the budget progresses to a public hearing and school committee approval. Finally, the school committee budget is reviewed by the selectmen and finance committee and then is approved by the town meeting.

In 2018, the district’s actual net school spending (NSS) was 14.9 percent above required NSS. In 2017, the city was \$2,473 below its tax levy limit and had a \$15.8 million override capacity in 2017.

The district and the town have a signed, written agreement detailing municipal expenditures in support of the schools. The expenditures are clearly documented in the budget and financial accounting. The district and the town use MUNIS financial software and it is interconnected.

The district has three schools covering pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The elementary school was built in 2016, the middle school in 2006, and Bartlett High School in 1979. Bartlett High School was recently invited into the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s (MSBA) “eligibility period.” The eligibility period is the first step in gaining MSBA approval and funding for a major renovation of Bartlett High School. The MSBA 2016 School Building Survey rated the high school and middle schools level 1 for condition, meaning that the buildings are in good condition with few or no building systems needing attention. Both are rated level 1 for general environment and underutilized for space utilization. Park Avenue Elementary is not rated because it was new in 2016.

The district has a long-term capital plan for building maintenance that was created in 2015 by a consultant architect and is regularly updated by the district. A related capital budget request is sent to the town annually. There is a similar, separate plan for technology.

### ***Strength Finding***

**1. District and municipal leaders have a positive working relationship, which has contributed to a collaborative budget process.**

**A.** The relationship between district leaders and town officials is professional and collaborative.

1. A town official spoke highly of the district’s financial management. The official stated that the schools managed funds well and that the town offices had confidence in the district’s

operation. The official said that there was good rapport with the schools. The official also stated that the town government was happy with the condition of the school buildings.

2. School administrators said that relations with the town were “good.”
  3. School committee members spoke about the positive relations between the district and the town.
    - a. One school committee member stated that relationships with the town and town boards were “very positive.”
    - b. Another stated that relationships with the town manager were “good,” noting that the selectmen were “always willing to help.”
    - c. A third school committee member said that the relationship between the school committee and the town was a strength and that positive relationships were a help when discussing budget matters with the town manager.
- B.** The district and the town work together to achieve a budget that is satisfactory to the district and affordable for the town.
1. Periodic meetings are held with school administrators, the town manager, town department heads, individual selectmen, and finance committee members to ensure that all stakeholders understand each other’s budget issues.
  2. The superintendent stated that the budget was adequate.
- C.** According to DESE data, between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2018, Webster’s actual net school spending (NSS) fluctuated with an overall increase and consistently exceeded the requirement.
1. The district’s actual NSS increased from \$18,381,472 in fiscal year 2009 to \$25,778,481 in fiscal year 2018.
  2. The district’s actual NSS exceeded the requirement by 5.3 percent in fiscal year 2009. That excess percentage has grown, with the fiscal year 2018 actual NSS exceeding the requirement by 14.9 percent.

**Impact:** Because district leaders and town officials work collaboratively, resources likely can be used effectively and challenges can be addressed quickly, to improve student outcomes.

## ***Challenges and Areas for Growth***

### **2. The district's public budget document does not clearly link district and school goals, and budget priorities.**

- A.** The budget document is a 35-page presentation organized by school and department.
  - 1. The budget document consists primarily of spreadsheets showing the budget history for four years. For fiscal year 2020, the district's Office of District Business and Finance webpage shows three draft budget documents and the school committee approved budget.
  - 2. The budget document includes a budget section for each school and department along with a summary of the total budget.
  - 3. Each spreadsheet is followed by a comments section.
    - a. The comments show proposed staffing levels for each personnel group and note any change from the current year. They do not show staffing trends for the four-year budget history.
    - b. The districtwide departmental budgets do not refer to budget or staffing-level decisions being connected to district goals in a narrative or monetized manner.
    - c. School-level budgets do not refer to budget or staffing-level decisions being related to School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in a narrative or monetized manner.
    - d. The effect of grant and aid funds such as Title I, IDEA, and circuit breaker are shown in some places, but all grant expenditures and staffing are not delineated.
    - e. The fiscal year 2019 budget documents include a presentation named *Budget at a Glance*.
  - 4. The narrative information is separate from the budget document.
- B.** The district's Office of District Business and Finance webpage contains the fiscal year 2020 budget, three narrative presentations on the foundation budget, Chapter 70 calculations, and three narrative presentations on budget decisions. The presentations were made at several school committee meetings.
  - 1. The three presentations on foundation and Chapter 70 matters demonstrate the district's concerns about meeting required net school spending levels and acquiring more equitable Chapter 70 aid.
  - 2. The three budget presentations contain extensive information about the district's budget process.
    - a. The presentations include budget goals.

- b. Extensive related statistical information is included.
  - c. The presentations include narrative on how budget decisions were reached.
  - d. While much of the information may be related to student performance, access, and outcomes, there is no clear linkage to budget decisions.
- C.** The budget presentations do not link the district budget to the district’s districtwide improvement initiatives.
- 1. The 2013–2017 strategic plan/district improvement plan (DIP), which is referenced in the budget presentations, is outdated and its goals are not clearly linked to budget goals.
  - 2. Budget presentations refer to instructional strategies, the strategic plan, School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and turnaround plans, but do not detail how these documents drive budget decisions.
  - 3. The presentations contain a slide on budget goals, but the goals are not clearly linked to instructional goals.
  - 4. The presentations contain student performance data, but the data does not appear in the budget document, and is not clearly connected to budget decisions.
- D.** At the time of the onsite review in March 2019, the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were in various stages of approval. The budget document and does not make clear the relationship of the budget to school improvement planning.
- 1. The SIPs are referred to in the budget presentations, but their goals are not clearly linked to budget goals.
  - 2. The budget document does not refer to existing or proposed turnaround plans.

**Impact:** A budget without clear connections to district and school goals does not give stakeholders a clear picture of how resources are allocated to support the district’s priorities.

### ***Recommendation***

- 1. The district should develop a budget document that is clear, complete, and details how the budget supports district and school goals, how much schools and programs cost, and how outside funds are used.**
  - A.** The district should produce a budget document that contains all the essential information about the financial operations of the district.

1. All funding sources should be included with detailed spending plans. Estimated grant amounts, circuit breaker, school choice, and expenses from other revolving accounts would be included in this section.
- B. The budget document should demonstrate how the budget supports district and school goals, as well as descriptions and subtotals for school and program staffing and costs.
1. The document should demonstrate how student performance data, particularly data related to performance, access, and opportunity outcomes and gaps, have been used to set budget priorities.
  2. The district should consider including in the budget document narratives explaining underlying assumptions and major changes.
- C. The district might consider expanding the 2019 *Budget at a Glance* document into a complete budget document.

**Benefits:** By implementing this recommendation, the district will have a comprehensive budget document that clearly presents the district's current education efforts. In addition, the budget document, and the process used to create it, will inform budget development and likely create trust and confidence among stakeholders in the district's sound stewardship of public funds.

**Recommended resources:**

- *Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting* ([https://www.erstrategies.org/library/implementing\\_student-based\\_budgeting](https://www.erstrategies.org/library/implementing_student-based_budgeting)), from Education Resource Strategies, describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs.
- The Rennie Center's *Smart School Budgeting* (<http://www.renniecenter.org/research/reports/smart-school-budgeting-resources-districts>) is a summary of existing resources on school finance, budgeting, and reallocation.
- *Best Practices in School District Budgeting* (<http://www.gfoa.org/best-practices-school-district-budgeting>) outlines steps to developing a budget that best aligns resources with student achievement goals. Each step includes a link to a specific resource document with relevant principles and policies to consider.
- *How to Create an Award Winning Budget Presentation* (<https://asbointl.org/awards-career-development/meritorious-budget-award-pathway-to-the-mba-/resources>), from the Association of School Business Officials International, has many suggestions and standards that can help districts improve their budgets.



## Appendix A: Review Team, Activities, Schedule, Site Visit

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### Review Team Members

The review was conducted from March 5–8, 2019, by the following team of independent DESE consultants.

1. Tom Pandiscio, Leadership and Governance
2. William Blake, Curriculum and Instruction
3. Karen Laba, Assessment
4. Christine Brandt, Human Resources and Professional Development, *review team coordinator*
5. Marilynne Smith Quarcoo, Student Support
6. David King, Financial and Asset management

### District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted during the review:

The team conducted interviews with the following municipal personnel: town manager.

The team conducted interviews with the following members of the school committee: the chair and three members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the teachers' association: two co-presidents, the secretary, and the treasurer.

The team conducted interviews/focus groups with the following central office administrators: the superintendent, the director of math and science curriculum, the director of literacy and Title I, the director of student support services, and the business manager.

The team visited the following schools: Park Avenue Elementary (Pre-K–4), Webster Middle School (grades 5–8), and Bartlett High School (grades 9–12).

During school visits, the team conducted interviews/focus groups with students, students' families, and 3 principals, and focus groups with 6 elementary-school teachers, 19 middle-school teachers, and 29 high-school teachers.

The team observed 56 classes in the district: 16 at the high school, 24 at the middle school, and 16 at the elementary school. Note: the visit was delayed one day because of a snow cancellation and there was a half-day student dismissal for professional development.

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, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).
- 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.

### Site Visit Schedule

<b>Tuesday</b> 3/5/2019	<b>Wednesday</b> 3/6/2019	<b>Thursday</b> 3/7/2019	<b>Friday</b> 3/8/2019
Interviews with district staff and principals; document reviews; teacher focus groups; students’ families focus groups interview with teachers’ association; and visits to Webster Middle School and Bartlett High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; Interviews with town or city personnel; students focus groups; and visits to Park Avenue Elementary School, Webster Middle School, and Bartlett High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; interviews with school committee members; visits to Park Avenue Elementary School, Webster Middle School, and Bartlett High School for classroom observations.	Interviews with school leaders; follow-up interviews; district review team meeting; visits to Park Avenue Elementary School, and Webster Middle School for classroom observations; district wrap-up meeting with the superintendent.

## Appendix B: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table B1a: Webster Public Schools  
2018–2019 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

Group	District	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total
African-American	99	5.4%	87,104	9.2%
Asian	39	2.1%	66,890	7.0%
Hispanic	498	27.2%	197,644	20.8%
Native American	2	0.1%	2,159	0.2%
White	1,065	58.2%	561,096	59.0%
Native Hawaiian	2	0.1%	802	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	126	6.9%	35,936	3.8%
All	1,831	100.0%	951,631	100.0%

Note: As of October 1, 2018

**Table B1b: Webster Public Schools  
2018–2019 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations**

Group	District			State		
	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of District	N	Percent of High Needs	Percent of State
Students w/ disabilities	399	34.3%	21.3%	173,843	38.0%	18.1%
Econ. Dis.	968	83.2%	52.9%	297,120	64.9%	31.2%
EL and Former EL	176	15.1%	9.6%	99,866	21.8%	10.5%
All high needs students	1,164	100.0%	62.3%	458,044	100.0%	47.6%

Notes: As of October 1, 2018. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs students are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,869; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 962,297.

**Table B2a: Webster Public Schools  
Attendance Rates by Student Group, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	98	92.9	93.6	94.3	94.6	1.7	94.1
Asian	38	96.8	97.0	97.0	96.7	-0.1	96.2
Hispanic or Latino	553	91.9	91.5	92.3	91.8	-0.1	92.7
Multi-Race	132	92.3	93.9	94.0	93.3	1.0	94.4
White	1,206	93.7	94.1	94.0	93.9	0.2	95.1
High Needs	1,344	92.0	92.2	92.4	92.3	0.3	93.2
Econ. Dis.	1,198	91.8	91.8	92.1	92.0	0.2	92.5
SWD	458	91.6	91.8	91.7	91.5	-0.1	92.9
EL	170	92.9	93.7	93.2	93.1	0.2	93.3
All	2,035	93.3	93.6	93.7	93.4	0.1	94.5

Notes: The attendance rate is calculated by dividing the total number of days students attended school by the total number of days students were enrolled in a particular school year. A student’s attendance rate is counted toward any district the student attended. In addition, district attendance rates included students who were out placed in public collaborative or private alternative schools/programs at public expense. Attendance rates have been rounded; percent change is based on unrounded numbers.

**Table B2b: Webster Public Schools  
Chronic Absence Rates by Student Group\*, 2015–2018**

Group	N (2018)	2015	2016	2017	2018	4-yr Change	State (2018)
African American/Black	98	26.4	19.3	19.1	15.3	-11.1	16.4
Asian	38	2.6	0.0	2.8	2.6	0.0	7.6
Hispanic or Latino	553	31.9	29.1	27.5	28.8	-3.1	22.5
Multi-Race	132	24.8	20.8	20.0	19.7	-5.1	14.2
White	1,206	18.4	16.0	15.3	17.6	-0.8	10.0
High Needs	1,344	28.2	25.6	25.1	25.8	-2.4	20.1
Econ. Dis.	1,198	29.7	27.5	26.8	27.2	-2.5	22.9
SWD	458	30.9	26.2	26.2	29.7	-1.2	20.7
EL	170	27.3	23.4	22.4	24.1	-3.2	20.4
All	2,035	21.3	18.9	18.5	20.3	-1.0	13.2

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

**Table B3: Webster Public Schools  
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years 2016–2018**

	FY16		FY17		FY18	
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual
<b>Expenditures</b>						
From local appropriations for schools:						
By school committee	\$18,271,487	\$18,271,488	\$19,209,244	\$19,209,243	\$20,086,062	\$20,036,717
By municipality	\$9,857,412	\$9,815,510	\$10,111,116	\$10,342,519	\$10,665,164	\$10,529,938
Total from local appropriations	\$28,128,899	\$28,086,998	\$29,320,360	\$29,551,762	--	\$30,566,655
From revolving funds and grants	--	\$3,543,497	--	\$3,519,297	--	\$3,601,654
Total expenditures	--	\$31,630,495	--	\$33,071,059	--	\$34,168,309
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>						
Chapter 70 state aid*	--	\$11,055,488	--	\$11,989,003	--	\$12,255,637
Required local contribution	--	\$10,346,397	--	\$10,147,763	--	\$10,170,354
Required net school spending**	--	\$21,401,885	--	\$22,136,766	--	\$22,425,991
Actual net school spending	--	\$23,075,524	--	\$24,534,398	--	\$25,778,481
Over/under required (\$)	--	\$1,673,639	--	\$2,397,632	--	\$3,352,490
Over/under required (%)	--	7.8%	--	10.8%	--	14.9%

\*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.

\*\*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.

Sources: FY16, FY17, and FY18 District End-of-Year Reports, Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website

Data retrieved 11/13/18 and 8/5/19

**Table B4: Webster Public Schools  
Expenditures Per In-District Pupil  
Fiscal Years 2015–2017**

<b>Expenditure Category</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Administration	\$532	\$535	\$611
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,038	\$917	\$888
Teachers	\$4,963	\$4,988	\$5,069
Other teaching services	\$1,542	\$1,394	\$1,701
Professional development	\$224	\$214	\$276
Instructional materials, equipment and technology	\$139	\$163	\$82
Guidance, counseling and testing services	\$343	\$450	\$493
Pupil services	\$1,424	\$1,487	\$1,677
Operations and maintenance	\$862	\$861	\$859
Insurance, retirement and other fixed costs	\$2,470	\$2,435	\$2,687
<b>Total expenditures per in-district pupil</b>	<b>\$13,538</b>	<b>\$13,444</b>	<b>\$14,343</b>

Sources: [Per-pupil expenditure reports on ESE website](#)

Note: Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding.

## Appendix C: Instructional Inventory

Focus Area #1: Learning Objectives & Expectations		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter.	ES	0%	6%	69%	25%	3.2
	MS	4%	13%	71%	13%	2.9
	HS	0%	19%	63%	19%	3.0
	<b>Total #</b>	1	7	38	10	3.0
	<b>Total %</b>	2%	13%	68%	18%	
2. The teacher ensures that students understand what they should be learning in the lesson and why.	ES	0%	6%	75%	19%	3.1
	MS	4%	50%	46%	0%	2.4
	HS	0%	38%	50%	13%	2.8
	<b>Total #</b>	1	19	31	5	2.7
	<b>Total %</b>	2%	34%	55%	9%	
3. The teacher uses appropriate classroom activities well matched to the learning objective(s).	ES	0%	13%	69%	19%	3.1
	MS	4%	29%	63%	4%	2.7
	HS	0%	25%	56%	19%	2.9
	<b>Total #</b>	1	13	35	7	2.9
	<b>Total %</b>	2%	23%	63%	13%	2.6
4. The teacher conducts frequent checks for student understanding, provides feedback, and adjusts instruction.	ES	6%	0%	69%	25%	3.1
	MS	8%	25%	67%	0%	2.6
	HS	6%	25%	44%	25%	2.9
	<b>Total #</b>	4	10	34	8	2.8
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	18%	61%	14%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #1</b>	ES					12.5
	MS					10.6
	HS					11.6
	<b>Total</b>					11.4

<b>Focus Area #2: Student Engagement &amp; Higher-Order Thinking</b>		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
5. Students assume responsibility to learn and are engaged in the lesson.	<b>ES</b>	0%	6%	75%	19%	3.1
	<b>MS</b>	0%	38%	63%	0%	2.6
	<b>HS</b>	0%	31%	44%	25%	2.9
	<b>Total #</b>	0	15	34	7	2.9
	<b>Total %</b>	0%	27%	61%	13%	
6. Students engage in higher-order thinking.	<b>ES</b>	6%	31%	44%	19%	2.8
	<b>MS</b>	21%	46%	33%	0%	2.1
	<b>HS</b>	31%	31%	31%	6%	2.1
	<b>Total #</b>	11	21	20	4	2.3
	<b>Total %</b>	20%	38%	36%	7%	
7. Students communicate their ideas and thinking with each other.	<b>ES</b>	0%	25%	75%	0%	2.8
	<b>MS</b>	25%	29%	42%	4%	2.3
	<b>HS</b>	19%	25%	50%	6%	2.4
	<b>Total #</b>	9	15	30	2	2.4
	<b>Total %</b>	16%	27%	54%	4%	
8. Students engage with meaningful, real-world tasks.	<b>ES</b>	0%	25%	69%	6%	2.8
	<b>MS</b>	4%	33%	58%	4%	2.6
	<b>HS</b>	9%	19%	50%	13%	2.6
	<b>Total #</b>	4	15	33	4	2.7
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	27%	59%	7%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #2</b>	<b>ES</b>					11.4
	<b>MS</b>					9.6
	<b>HS</b>					10.1
	<b>Total</b>					10.3



<b>Focus Area #3: Inclusive Practice &amp; Classroom Culture</b>		Insufficient Evidence	Limited Evidence	Sufficient Evidence	Compelling Evidence	Avg Number of points
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1 to 4)
9. The teacher ensures that students are engaging in challenging tasks regardless of learning needs.	<b>ES</b>	0%	6%	88%	6%	3.0
	<b>MS</b>	8%	25%	67%	0%	2.6
	<b>HS</b>	13%	19%	50%	19%	2.8
	<b>Total #</b>	4	10	38	4	2.8
	<b>Total %</b>	7%	18%	68%	7%	
10. The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies.	<b>ES</b>	6%	6%	63%	25%	3.1
	<b>MS</b>	13%	58%	25%	4%	2.2
	<b>HS</b>	25%	25%	44%	6%	2.3
	<b>Total #</b>	8	19	23	6	2.5
	<b>Total %</b>	14%	34%	41%	11%	
11. Classroom routines and positive supports are in place to ensure that students behave appropriately.	<b>ES</b>	0%	6%	50%	44%	3.4
	<b>MS</b>	4%	29%	63%	4%	2.7
	<b>HS</b>	0%	25%	25%	50%	3.3
	<b>Total #</b>	1	12	27	16	3.0
	<b>Total %</b>	2%	21%	48%	29%	
12. The classroom climate is conducive to teaching and learning.	<b>ES</b>	0%	6%	44%	50%	3.4
	<b>MS</b>	4%	8%	50%	38%	3.2
	<b>HS</b>	0%	25%	13%	63%	3.4
	<b>Total #</b>	1	7	21	27	3.3
	<b>Total %</b>	2%	13%	38%	48%	
<b>Total Score For Focus Area #3</b>	<b>ES</b>					12.9
	<b>MS</b>					10.7
	<b>HS</b>					11.7
	<b>Total</b>					11.6