

# Manchester Essex Regional School District Targeted District Review Report

January 2025

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Pedro Martinez  
Commissioner  
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## Executive Summary

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In accordance with Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct a targeted review of Manchester Essex Regional School District (hereafter, MERSD) in January 2025. Data collection activities associated with the review included interviews, focus groups, and document reviews and were designed to understand how districts operate in support of continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on three of the six standards (and related indicators) that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> The resulting report provides an in-depth look at district systems, policies, and practices and includes recommendations to promote systemic improvements and advance equitable student outcomes and experiences.

In addition, to collect data on instructional practices, four observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited MERSD during the week of January 27, 2025. The observers conducted 60 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused primarily on literacy, English language arts (ELA), and mathematics. The Teachstone Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) protocol, developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia,<sup>2</sup> guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of the CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

### Leadership and Governance

The district demonstrates several areas of strength related to leadership and governance. MERSD has established leadership and governing structures, characterized by a strong partnership between the superintendent and the school committee, which supports alignment of policy decisions with strategic objectives. The school committee, district leaders, and school leaders work together collaboratively. The inclusive and participatory environment of school councils within the district fosters open communication and contributes to a collaborative environment. In addition, the district's commitment to community engagement is evident in its strategic planning process; it actively seeks and incorporates input from various stakeholders. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) serves as a cohesive framework that guides School Improvement Plans (SIPs) across MERSD, with clear alignment and active monitoring of progress. Furthermore, the district's culture involves a collaborative leadership approach that extends beyond internal teams to include partnerships with town leaders. Finally, the district engages stakeholders through various feedback mechanisms.

Despite these strengths, MERSD has areas in which it can improve. One challenge is the consistent implementation of the district's 10-year Strategic Plan and three-year District Improvement Plan while navigating financial constraints. Enhancing communication and opportunities for all stakeholder groups to contribute to district decision-making is another area for growth. By addressing these areas, the district can build on its existing strengths and continue to progress toward its strategic goals.

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

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Teachstone CLASS protocol, visit <https://teachstone.com/class/>.

## Human Resources and Professional Development

MERSD has strengths in several areas related to human resources infrastructure, policies, and practices. The hiring process is thorough and comprehensive, and new staff members are well supported through a structured onboarding process. The district's commitment to professional development and mentorship is evident, contributing to strong staff retention rates and the recognition of staff achievements. In addition, the Professional Development Council (PDC) aligns learning opportunities with the strategic plan, and the Mentor and Induction Program provides robust support for new teachers, facilitating their transition into the district.

The district has several areas for growth related to human resources and professional development. Enhancing the accuracy, consistency, and accessibility of staffing data would support human resources management. Recruitment and retention of diverse leaders remain challenging. In addition, there is a need to provide consistent feedback for administrators and teachers to foster continuous growth. Furthermore, improving the consistency and clarity of informal observations and walkthroughs across schools, aligning professional learning opportunities with school-based needs, and sustaining professional development offerings focused on identified areas of need through teacher-led initiatives are areas for district improvement. Finally, there is a need to focus on building in common planning time for high school teachers.

## Financial and Asset Management

MERSD has several strengths in financial and asset management. Firstly, its business office is well-qualified with a full-time director of finance and operations and credentialed supporting staff. The budgeting process is transparent, involving public presentations and hearings, and is guided by a multiyear financial plan with clear financial roadmaps. MERSD uses a transparent budgeting process that is informed by the district's multiyear financial plan. In addition, educators have access to additional funding through mini grants provided by parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) to supplement district work. Furthermore, the district established processes for procurement and contract management that further enhance operational efficiency. Finally, the district maintains a detailed capital asset inventory list, incorporating outside consultant building inventories to ensure comprehensive management of capital assets and projects and proactively monitors and plans for capital needs. An area for growth is developing a long-term plan that aligns with the current multiyear financial plan to address the budget gaps.

# Manchester Essex Regional School District: 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 carefully consider the effectiveness of systemwide functions, referring to the six district standards used by DESE: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. The MERSD district review examined three standards: Leadership and Governance, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Financial and Asset Management. Reviews provide the state, district leaders, and the public with an in-depth look into the systems, structures, and practices of a district and how they affect student experiences and opportunities. District reviews provide information and recommendations to support districts in implementing systemic improvements and advancing equitable student outcomes and experiences.

## Methodology

A district review team consisting of AIR staff members and subcontractors, with expertise in each district standard, reviews documentation and extant data prior to conducting an on-site visit. On-site data collection includes team members conducting interviews and focus group sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including municipal staff, school committee members, teachers' association representatives, district and school administrators, teachers, students, and students' families. Reviewers also conduct virtual focus groups and interviews as needed. Information about review activities and the site visit schedule is in Appendix A. Team members also observe classroom instruction and collect data using the CLASS protocol. The Districtwide Instructional Observation Report resulting from these classroom observations is in Appendix B.

Following the site visit, all interview and focus group data are transcribed using automated transcription. The transcripts are then coded using both deterministic coding, based on the protocol questions, and natural language processing models. Team members analyze the coded data to develop a set of objective findings. The team lead and multiple quality assurance reviewers, including DESE staff, then review the initial draft of the report. DESE staff provide recommendations for the district, based on the findings of strengths and areas for growth identified, before AIR finalizes and submits the report to DESE. DESE previews and then sends the report to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website. DESE also provides additional resources to support implementation of DESE's District Standards and Indicators, summarized in Appendix C.

## Site Visit

The site visit to MERSD occurred during the week of January 27, 2025. The site visit included 12 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 54 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted three teacher focus groups with six elementary school teachers, six middle school teachers, six high school teachers, and one family focus group with 11 parents. Data collection also included distributing a questionnaire to district leaders, as well as to

each principal, to gather information about district and school processes and operations; respondents in MERSD completed the district questionnaire and all four principal questionnaires.

The site team also conducted 60 observations of classroom instruction in four schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

### District Profile

MERSD is a regional school district that serves the towns of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea, though it operates independently from individual municipalities. Both towns are north of Boston and border each other and the city of Gloucester. According to census data, Manchester-by-the-Sea’s median income from 2019 to 2023 was \$197,875, and Essex’s median income from 2019 to 2023 was \$152,371, which are both above the state median income of \$101,341. In 2023, Manchester-by-the-Sea had an estimated 5,396 residents; Essex had an estimated 3,675 residents (according to the 2020 decennial census).

Pamela A. Beaudoin has served as the superintendent of MERSD since 2010. Governance of the district is through a nine-member school committee: Seven voting members (four represent Manchester; three represent Essex) are elected by their respective towns for three-year terms, plus two nonvoting members (the superintendent and MERSD director of finance and operations).

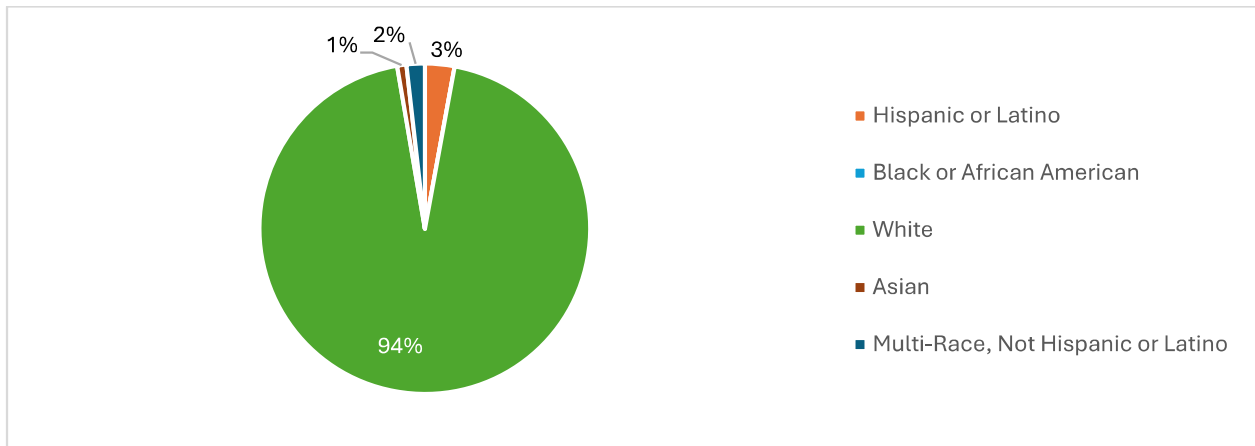
In the 2024-2025 school year, the district served 1,190 students across its four schools. Since the 2020-2021 school year, total enrollment has decreased by 74 students. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school for the 2024-2025 school year.

**Table 1. Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2024-2025**

School	Type	Grades served	Enrollment
Manchester Memorial Elementary School	Elementary	PK-5	304
Essex Elementary School	Elementary	1-5	215
Manchester Essex Regional Middle School	Middle	6-8	279
Manchester Essex Regional High School	High	9-12	392
		Total	1,190

Figure 1 shows the distribution of MERSD’s students by race/ethnicity. Figure 2 shows student makeup for selected populations compared with state averages. Full enrollment figures compared with the state are in Tables D1 and D2 in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides additional information about district enrollment, student attendance, and expenditures.

**Figure 1. Distribution of Students, by Race/Ethnicity (2024-2025)**



**Figure 2. Distribution of Students, by Selected Populations (2024-2025)**

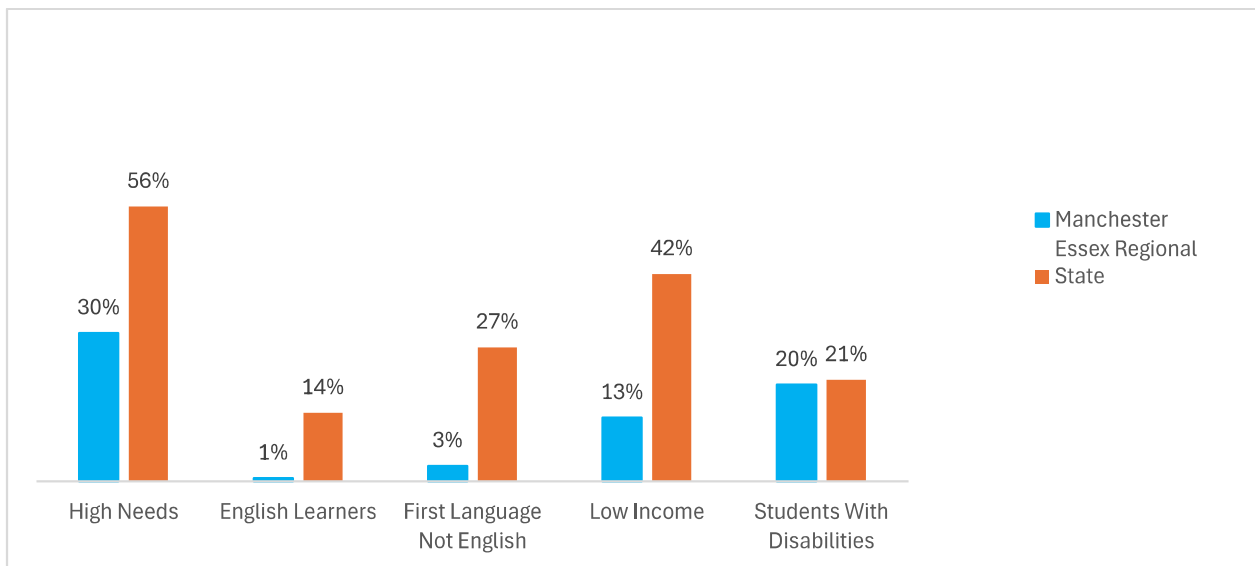
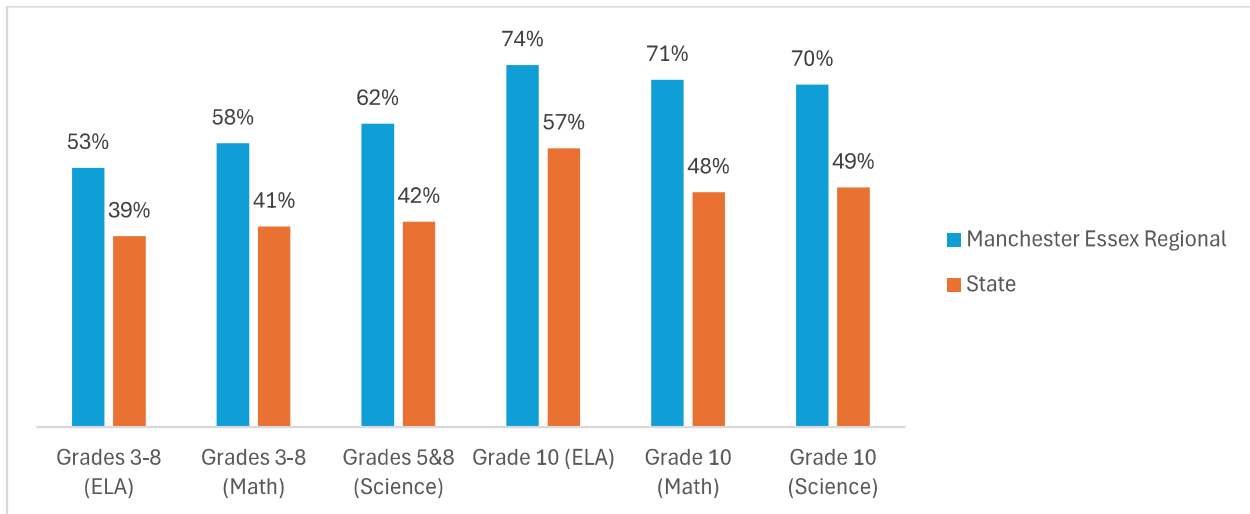


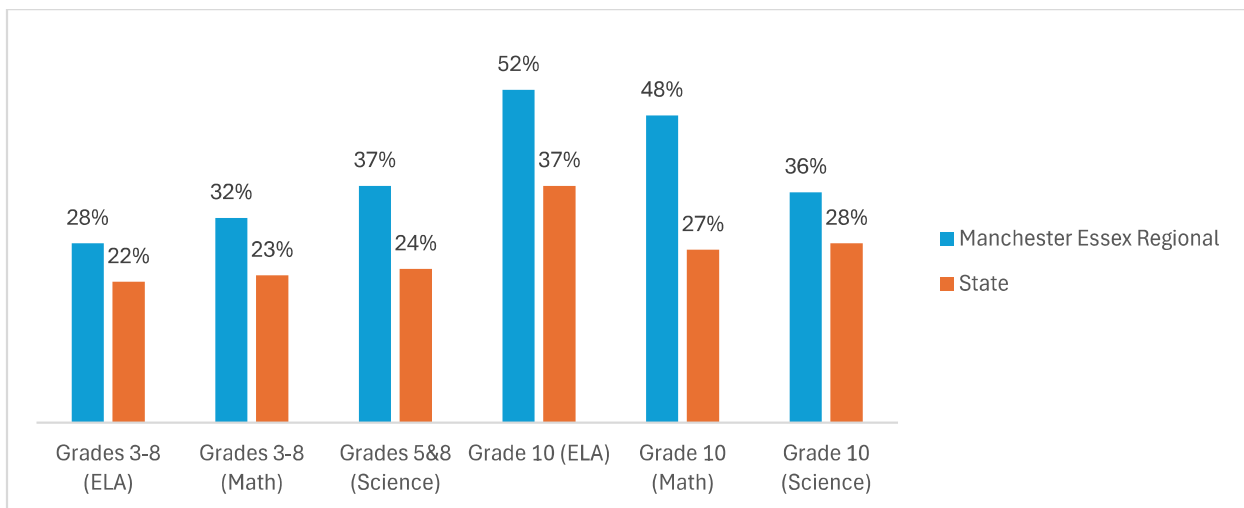
Figure 3 shows the percentage of MERSD’s All Students group meeting or exceeding expectations on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) compared with the statewide percentage of All Students meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS. In 2024, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was higher for MERSD than for the state in Grades 3-8 (ELA and mathematics), 5 and 8 (science), and 10 (ELA, mathematics, and science).

**Figure 3. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, MCAS, 2024**



MERSD’s High Needs students, who comprise 30.1 percent of the district, met or exceeded expectations on the 2024 MCAS assessments at rates 6 percentage points to 21 percentage points above High Needs students across the state (see Figure 4). Mirroring state trends, it is important to note that the percentage of High Needs students at MERSD meeting or exceeding expectations is consistently at least 22 percent lower than the percentage of all students meeting or exceeding expectations. On the Grade 10 Science MCAS, the percentage of High Needs students who met or exceeded expectations was 34 percentage points below that of all students.

**Figure 4. Percentage of High Needs Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, MCAS, 2024**



MERSD’s 2023 four-year cohort graduation rate (98.4 percent) was 9.2 percentage points higher than the state rate (89.2 percent). The district’s dropout rate (0.2 percent) is almost 2 percentage points lower than the state rate (2.1 percent).

Of students who graduated from the district in 2022-2023, 81.3 percent went on to attend college or university by March 2023, which is 18.1 percentage points higher than the state rate of

63.2 percent. In addition, 8.8 percent of 2023-2024 graduates planned on entering the workforce or an apprenticeship after high school, compared with 14.6 percent of students across the state.

In 2024 statewide accountability results, no schools were identified as requiring assistance or intervention, and the district made substantial progress toward achieving its accountability targets, as set by DESE. Essex Elementary School (EES), Manchester Essex Regional Middle School, and Manchester Essex Regional High School all made substantial progress toward their targets, and Manchester Memorial Elementary School (MMES) met or exceeded its targets in 2024. EES was also identified as a School of Recognition that year.

In fiscal year 2023, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure for MERSD was \$23,504, which is \$2,627 more than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts with similar demographics (\$20,877) and \$2,482 less than the average in-district per-pupil expenditures in districts of similar wealth (\$25,986).<sup>3</sup> In-district per-pupil expenditures for MERSD were \$2,248 more than the average state spending per pupil (\$21,256). Actual net school spending was above what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table D5 in Appendix D.

## Classroom Observations

Four observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited MERSD during the week of January 27, 2025. The observers conducted 60 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The CLASS protocol guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

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

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

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

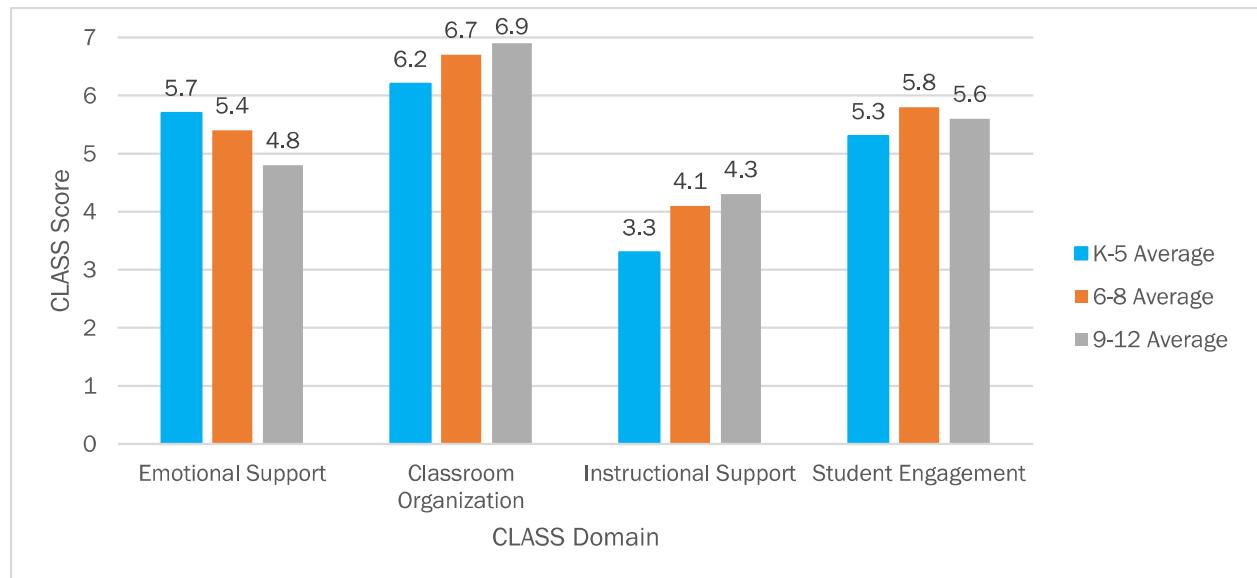
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<sup>3</sup> Districts with similar demographics and similar wealth are based on [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports](#) (retrieved February 2025).

of 6 or 7 (high range) indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

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

**Figure 5. CLASS Domain Averages by Grade Band**



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

## Leadership and Governance

This section examines the extent to which school committees, district leaders, school leaders, and advisory council members work collaboratively and strategically to promote high-quality teaching and learning that (a) is antiracist, inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural; (b) values and affirms each student and their families; and (c) creates equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly those historically underserved. It also focuses on the extent to which districts establish, implement, and evaluate policies, plans, procedures, systems, and budgets by focusing on achieving districtwide strategic objectives through the equitable and effective use of resources, which ultimately lead to high-quality teaching and learning for all students.

Table 2 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in leadership and governance in MERSD.

**Table 2. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Leadership and Governance Standard**

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
<a href="#">Leadership and Governing Structures</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The superintendent and school committee have a strong partnership through which they can align policy decisions with strategic objectives and execute the district’s strategic vision.</li> <li>■ The school committee, district leaders, and school leaders work together collaboratively.</li> <li>■ The inclusive and participatory environment of MERSD school councils fosters open communication and values diverse perspectives.</li> </ul>	
<a href="#">Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The district has a commitment to community engagement and collecting input to inform the strategic planning process.</li> <li>■ The district improvement plan serves as the overarching framework for guiding school improvement plans across MERSD, and alignment is evident across the district.</li> <li>■ The district actively monitors progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consistently implementing the district’s 10-year strategic plan and three-year improvement plan while navigating financial constraints</li> </ul>
<a href="#">District Culture</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The district has a collaborative leadership approach that extends beyond the internal district leadership to include strategic partnership with town leaders.</li> <li>■ The district uses two-way communication between district leaders and various stakeholder groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enhancing communication and opportunities for all stakeholder groups to contribute to district decision-making</li> </ul>

### Leadership and Governing Structures

Superintendent Pamela Beaudoin has led MERSD for 15 years, guiding the district through evolving educational priorities. In this role, she focuses on strategic planning, while balancing academic success with social-emotional learning. She explained, “We’re trying to strike a balance between traditional academic success . . . but also creating an environment in which kids can achieve their greatest potential because they are feeling welcomed and supported and safe in that environment.”

Interviews with school committee members and a review of MERSD’s school committee website affirmed the school committee’s responsibilities as overseeing educational goals, policies, and budget recommendations for the district. The committee has nine members: seven elected voting members—four from Manchester and three from Essex—and two nonvoting members: the superintendent and the director of finance and operations. The school committee operates through four subcommittees: Elementary Facilities, Finance, Policy & Program, and the Negotiation Team.

School committee meetings occur on the first and third Tuesdays of each month and are open to the public. Agendas typically include policy updates, budget reviews, educational program evaluations, and other district matters. Meeting minutes provide a record of discussions, decisions, votes, and public comments as well as updates from the superintendent on budget and educational programs.

The superintendent and the school committee have a strong partnership, through which they can align policy decisions with strategic objectives and execute the district’s strategic vision, which is a strength of MERSD. The school committee’s role involves policy oversight, guidance, and monitoring. School committee members agree that their responsibility is to provide “oversight . . . ensuring that policies are in place and adhered to, rather than direct involvement in implementation.” The superintendent has supported the school committee in growing its capacity to fulfill responsibilities. According to the school committee, members originally

did not have a very deep understanding of the processes that [the school committee] goes through on an annual basis and . . . needed a lot more input and . . . guidance from [the superintendent] . . . to familiarize themselves with [those processes].

They added,

At some points, there was some push and pull between the committee and [the superintendent] in terms of, well, this is how it’s always been done, but this isn’t how maybe the new committee members would like it to be done or see it being done. But . . . we are at a good place right now with the committee and that all of us have been on for at least three years at this point and have sort of figured out the ropes and come to a more common understanding of [the superintendent’s] role in working with us and our role in advising and overseeing [the superintendent’s] work.

In addition, school committee focus group respondents explained that development of the strategic plan was in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including a few school committee representatives. Furthermore, the superintendent and the school committee are currently discussing broadening the definition of academic excellence beyond academic achievement and growth.

The school committee is also responsible for evaluating the superintendent. One school committee member described the evaluation process as a two-year cycle. In years when an official performance review occurs, members use state-provided documents to conduct a detailed assessment. Each school committee member individually completes the evaluation and submits it to the chairperson. The chairperson compiles the responses into a final report, presents it at a school committee meeting, and provides the final version to the superintendent.

An established district leadership team, known as the Administrative Council (AC), includes the directors of finance and operations, the director of curriculum, instructional technology, and student services, all principals in the district, and the middle school and high school deans. This team actively supports MERSD's collaborative governance structure and works closely with the superintendent and the school committee to help the district meet its strategic objectives and operational goals. They meet twice per month and focus on strategic planning, resource allocation, staffing, program implementation, and operations. District leaders reported discussing staffing, program implementation, and operations more frequently and strategic planning and resource allocation occasionally. Meetings also involve discussions about personnel management, evaluation, and professional development. Separately, school leaders also have leadership teams comprised of K-8 grade level team leaders and 6-12 Curriculum Chairs. School leaders elaborated on how they work together and with district and school committee leaders to make decisions. One leader described how they identified efficiencies and funded district needs without having to increase the overall budget:

In November, we kind of take a look at our needs. We present them to the school committee. . . . Through that process, we might say we're going to shift money from here to here because we want to expand this area.

These examples highlight the collaborative nature of the school committee, district leaders, and school leaders, which is a strength of the district. Strategic planning, staffing, and budget discussions are central topics for collaboration. To support these discussions, district and school leaders rely on both informal and formal meetings that prioritize data-driven decision-making and regularly incorporate feedback to shape instructional goals and allocate resources.

The superintendent described how elected leaders, district leaders, and school leaders work together to advance the district's strategic objectives as "fairly collaborative." She noted, "It's a strong relationship between school committee and schools, even though [the school committee's] role is to challenge us." However, perspectives on collaboration and engagement with elected officials vary, suggesting that while the overall partnership is strong, some stakeholders perceive differences in how consistently or deeply they are engaged.

The school councils at MERSD include principals, teachers, caregivers, and, in some cases, students, providing a platform for collaborative decision-making and strategic planning at each school. Meetings occur monthly at Essex Elementary School (EES), Manchester Essex Regional High School, and Manchester Memorial Elementary School (MMES), and quarterly at Manchester Essex Regional Middle School. They focus on educational programs, SIPs, and community engagement, offering opportunities for families, staff, and community members to participate in school governance. Focus group participants described these councils as inclusive and participatory, noting their frequent updates on school issues and their role in providing feedback. One parent shared, "We get frequent updates on school issues and provide input on the School Improvement Plan," while another mentioned, "As school council rep, I think we gave feedback on community engagement and some academic programs."

## Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

A shared mission, vision, and core values anchor MERSD's strategic planning framework. These components align and reinforce one another, producing coherence across district priorities and initiatives. The mission and vision articulate the district's overarching purpose and aspirations; the Vision of the Graduate defines the key competencies that students should develop; the 10-year strategic plan translates those aspirations into high-level priorities; and the three-year District Improvement Plan (DIP) operationalizes those priorities into measurable, time-bound actions. Together, these plans provide a unified roadmap that guides school improvement planning and instructional decision-making across the district.

Building on this foundation, the district's 2022-2025 District Improvement Plan and Vision of the Graduate provide a shared framework for moving these values from aspirations to actionable priorities. The district's mission is "to provide a high-quality, comprehensive, student-centered educational experience that prepares them for a post-secondary educational or service experience, a career, and life as an engaged member of society." The vision was developed in partnership with the community to ensure that all students reach their unique potential by achieving academic excellence, valuing integrity, and becoming intellectually curious and critical thinkers. One school committee member explained how these foundational documents guide their work:

"For me, I look at the strategic plan as the guiding post when questions come up and questions come up to us from members of the community in all different ways. But also they come from students, they come from families and from teachers and administrators even. And it's always the place to look first."

This shared understanding also guides the district's theory of action: If we keep students at the center of decision-making, cultivate a collaborative and inclusive culture, articulate the relationship between social-emotional well-being and student achievement, and engage in two-way communication with our community, then students will realize their unique potential, achieve academic excellence, value integrity and honesty, and become intellectually curious and critical thinkers. Supporting this approach, the district's core values—directly stated in MERSD's District Improvement Plan—include whole child development, student achievement, climate, community partnerships, and resources.

The development of the district's strategic priorities began in 2019-2020 with an initial focus on the Vision of the Graduate, which identified key traits such as empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, communication, accountability, social-emotional awareness, and creativity. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the district to pause these efforts, shifting its focus to immediate challenges. As schools reopened, the district saw an opportunity to reassess and refine its priorities, integrating lessons learned from the pandemic. The superintendent noted:

Coming out of COVID, we actually were pretty excited because it was an opportune time to get back into the strategic planning process to try to figure out what we learned, how we could leverage what we learned going forward into the future.

To operationalize these long-term goals, the district created a three-year DIP, which breaks down broader strategic goals into actionable steps. The superintendent explained:

We do a three-year District Improvement Plan, which takes the big concepts of the strategic plan... [such as] where we want to be 10 years from now and breaks it down into three chunks... We lay out the three-year deliverables and how we're targeting the broader strategic initiatives. And we do annual updates on our progress... to [the] school committee.

These strategic priorities focus on four key initiatives: (a) establishing and fostering an authentic PK-12 learning environment, (b) fully integrating social-emotional learning into daily instruction, (c) nurturing an inclusive and diverse school culture, and (d) maintaining a sustainable financial plan. These initiatives support the district's Vision of the Graduate by fostering academic, social-emotional, and interpersonal skills such as empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication.

Recognizing that these priorities must be grounded in the voices of the community, MERSD engaged in extensive community feedback processes to refine and reinforce its strategic plans. As the district refocused its efforts after the pandemic, district and school leaders highlighted the importance of broad community engagement, which included public surveys, focus groups, and external reviews from organizations such as the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the New England League of Middle Schools. One school leader noted that MERSD conducted multiyear focus groups in which stakeholders participated in structured Zoom discussions to provide input.

As a result of this engagement, the MERSD Strategic Vision Final Quantitative Report provided key insights from a survey of 704 respondents, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, staff, and community members. The district used rating scales, comparative analysis, open-ended feedback, and World Café discussions—a structured conversational process for knowledge sharing—to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights. Respondents shared positive feedback about existing efforts, such as the district's rigorous curriculum, strong teachers, and focus on critical thinking, while also identifying areas for continued growth, including individualized instruction, real-world preparedness, financial literacy, and problem-solving skills. Students, in particular, prioritized mental health and future readiness more than other groups, and some respondents raised concerns about balancing academic excellence with social-emotional learning. These insights provided a data-driven foundation for the district's updated strategic priorities.

The DIP serves as the overarching framework for guiding school improvement plans (SIPs) across MERSD. School leaders confirmed that they align SIPs with the district's plan and tailor them to meet the specific needs of each school. One school leader explained that they craft their SIP goals based on the district's goals, and individual teachers then create their own goals aligned with those. Schools update their SIPs every two years, with annual check-ins to support ongoing alignment with the district's broader vision. For example, MMES focuses on authentic learning, social-emotional learning, and cultural competence, reflecting the district's strategic initiatives, while the high school prioritizes interdisciplinary instruction, social-emotional learning integration, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Despite the strength of this alignment, the district faces challenges with synchronizing the revision cycle of the DIP and the SIPs. School leaders noted that the DIP is revised every three years, while SIPs follow a two-year cycle, which can create temporary misalignments in focus. District leaders also acknowledged that shifting political climates, such as changing views on DEI, may influence future adjustments: “The current climate is shifting away from... DEI... so we’re curious to see if our school plans will make a shift as well.”

Nonetheless, the district demonstrates a strong commitment to monitoring progress and adjusting practices as needed. The 2023-2024 EOY DIP Progress Report highlights this commitment, tracking the completion status of deliverables across strategic goals. School leaders described how they conduct annual check-ins to monitor progress on SIPs and use this data to inform DIP progress updates. At the time of the onsite, the report categorized 42% of deliverables as complete, 35% in progress, and 23% behind schedule, with budget constraints delaying some finance-related deliverables.

School committee members and school leaders noted several challenges in fully implementing the district’s 10-year strategic plan and three-year improvement plan, largely due to financial constraints, which is an area for growth. One school leader explained, “Balancing the budget and managing increased costs with slower-growing revenue... we’ve had a lot of budget cuts over the last many years,” adding that these financial pressures limit how much of the strategic plan can be realized at any one time. School committee members echoed these concerns, describing a constant balancing act between long-term priorities and immediate operational needs, with one member likening it to “triage” and focusing on “what we need to get done in the moment.” Another committee member remarked that the improvement plan sometimes feels like an “add-on” rather than a meaningful adjustment, stating, “It often feels like... we’re adding more to the teacher’s workload or the administrator’s workload.” Beyond these financial constraints, some committee members expressed that the complex language of the improvement plans makes them hard to understand and communicate, with one member stating, “Sometimes the District Improvement Plans are a lot of ‘edu-speak’ and hard to understand... Sometimes I wish somebody could summarize for me in three sentences... what we’re really working on.”

## District Culture

A key strength is MERSD’s collaborative approach, which extends beyond the internal district leadership to include strategic partnerships with town leaders. MERSD demonstrates a collaborative and strategic approach, in which the school committee, superintendent, and district-level administrators work in partnership with the school community to foster shared responsibility and data-driven decision-making to improve student outcomes. The superintendent’s comments highlight how both district and town leaders regularly engage to promote alignment on the district’s strategic objectives and stated, “The towns overall—there is a strong commitment to schools and a desire to want to fund them appropriately and support the work that we’re doing.” The district and the towns have a long-standing collaboration meeting in which the board chairs, the town administrators, and the finance manager typically meet one Friday a month, or more often if needed, throughout the year “to keep everybody . . . abreast of what’s going on—no surprises.” Town officials agree that they are involved and informed, attending bi-weekly school committee meetings, and also have regular meetings with the school leadership team. Town officials described the nature of the relationship,

saying that they work together “when we want to collaborate on services that we might be able to share with each other . . . [such as] use of facilities . . . because the communities are allowed to use the facilities.” This proactive collaboration allows for alignment and helps address challenges in a timely manner.

Another strength within the district’s culture is the two-way communication between district leaders and various stakeholder groups. The superintendent shared how the district involved parents and families in developing the DIP through community input session called “World Café.” and the district hosts “Superintendent Coffees” four to five times per year in which stakeholders can engage in open dialogue with district leadership. The district’s efforts extend to communication with teachers, with one teacher noting, “I walked into the superintendent’s office. . . . She sat and talked with me for over a half hour,” which demonstrates the accessibility of district leadership. In addition, the district maintains transparency through the MERSD Superintendent’s Corner blog, the district newsletter, and its Facebook page. These platforms allow the district to communicate updates and strategic decisions with the community.

However, despite these examples of strong communication and collaboration, there is room for improvement in ensuring consistent communication across all stakeholder groups, especially in ongoing decision-making, which is an area for growth. For example, although the school committee and superintendent collaborate on the budget, some focus group participants feel that final decisions, particularly on budget allocations and DIPs, are made without revisiting stakeholder input. Despite the collaborative relationship between the district and town officials during budget season, a municipal official noted that opportunities for input from other elected bodies outside of budget hearings are limited. They explained, “Other than a public hearing, [the school committee does not] take input from the elected officials, as sometimes I wish they would,” and expressed a desire for more dialogue and structured collaboration with their municipal partners throughout the year, beyond the typical budget-focused meetings. In addition, teacher focus group participants shared concerns that communication from district leadership has often been delayed or inconsistent, particularly on day-to-day issues. They described a pattern of needing to follow up multiple times to get a response, which has contributed to a broader perception of disengagement. While major concerns are eventually addressed, teachers felt that smaller, ongoing issues do not receive timely attention, leading to frustration and a feeling that their input is not fully valued in decision-making. This delay in communication, combined with a lack of ongoing feedback systems, contributes to the perception that teachers are not sufficiently involved in decision-making.

MERSD has demonstrated strong stability in leadership. The superintendent has emphasized the importance of continuity and strategic planning, stating, “We’ve been pretty fortunate that we haven’t had a ton [of leadership transitions]. . . . I think we lean heavily into our planning and the fact that we have a roadmap of what we’re doing.” Building leadership has maintained high retention, though in years since 2022, there has been an increase in leadership turnover. In many of these cases, experienced interim leaders served for multiple years before the district hired permanent replacements.

## Recommendations

- *The district should address the misalignment between its strategic and improvement plans and its anticipated resources.*
- *The district should establish ongoing feedback mechanisms so that all stakeholders, including teachers and elected officials, are meaningfully involved in decision-making at the school- and district-levels.*

## Human Resources and Professional Development

This section examines the extent to which the district has established systems, policies, and practices that allow administrators to effectively recruit, hire, onboard, and support a highly effective, diverse, and culturally responsive workforce. It also focuses on the systems and structures that the district uses to provide all educators with ongoing access to high-quality professional learning and actionable feedback and establishes a culture that fosters collaboration, retention, recognition, and advancement.

Table 3 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in human resources and professional development in MERSD.

**Table 3. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Human Resources and Professional Development Standard**

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
<a href="#">Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies, and Practices</a>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving the consistency and clarity of staffing and certification data to more effectively support workforce planning and informed decision-making</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Staffing</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district’s hiring process is thorough and collaborative.</li> <li>MERSD provides new staff with a structured and supportive onboarding experience.</li> <li>The district recognizes staff achievements.</li> <li>The district demonstrates strong teacher retention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruiting and retaining diverse leaders amid challenges in attracting candidates from varied backgrounds</li> <li>Maintaining consistency of informal observations and walkthroughs across schools</li> <li>Consistently providing feedback for administrators and teachers and articulating areas for improvement for all staff</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Professional Learning</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MERSD’s Mentor and Induction Program provides strong support for new teachers, helping them transition into the district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High school teachers do not have built-in common planning time, making collaboration efforts difficult</li> </ul>

### Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies, and Practices

As a regional school district, MERSD is responsible for human resources payroll benefits, onboarding, and employee management. A town administrator from the town of Essex explained,

The towns of Essex and Manchester came together 24 years ago and created [a third entity], the Manchester Essex Regional School District. They are not a municipality, but they act . . . on their own accord. They have their own contract, they source their own health insurance, and they don’t have anything to do with either of the towns directly.

The current human resources manager under the direction of the director of finance & operations has managed MERSD's human resources department, which supports district operations, for three years. The manager collaborates with district payroll staff, a data analyst, administrative assistants, and school and district leaders to support district operations to manage personnel processes effectively. The department manages record-keeping and maintains compliance with legal and district requirements.

The human resources department places significant importance on safeguarding employee data by locking physical personnel files in the human resources office and restricting access to electronic records to authorized personnel. Additionally, employee records, including pay stubs, benefits, and W-2s, are accessible through Employee Forward, an online platform that provides staff with secure, self-service access to their personnel information.

MERSD offers support for educators' professional development and licensure. The district verifies credentials through the DESE Educator Licensure and Renewal portal, requiring administrators to document the specific license under which a teacher is hired for better tracking and compliance. To support educators in maintaining licensure, MERSD provides professional development newsletters every four to six weeks and maintains a website with renewal resources, although educators ultimately bear responsibility for managing their certifications.

District staff emphasized the hands-on nature of human resources operations, stating, "There's a couple of things like payroll . . . it's such a small office that [district staff] all kind of work together." Human resources plays an active role in addressing employee inquiries regarding salary, benefits, and leave by meeting individually with staff to review paperwork, explain available options, and ensure all necessary documentation is completed and tracked. The superintendent primarily handles grievances and misconduct cases, with the human resources manager providing support as needed.

Whereas school leaders receive some staffing data to support decision-making, the district is refining its procedures to improve the clarity, accessibility, and consistency of this information, which remains an area for growth for the district. District staff explained, "The data is in Aspen, but if I was going to [sort] by department, it's not consistently identified in departmental and subject areas. So that's the cleanup—to make sure that it's input more consistently." Despite systems not allowing for easy maintenance and reporting of this data, the district is refining its processes so that staffing and certification information is accurate, easily accessible, and aligned with workforce planning and instructional priorities.

## Staffing

The MERSD hiring protocol requires managers and staff to follow a structured process for recruiting and selecting candidates. They post job vacancies on SchoolSpring for at least two weeks and consider only applicants who submit complete credentials. Administrators prescreen candidates, and a hiring committee interviews and reviews applications. Committee members facilitate structured interviews, and administrators conduct reference checks. Finally, the superintendent reviews and confirms the hiring decision and issues a formal offer.

Although district staff characterized the district as “pretty good with SchoolSpring and filling vacancies,” recruiting candidates from diverse backgrounds remains an area for growth. The superintendent acknowledged that the district lacks “a well-articulated approach” for recruiting and retaining diverse staff and faces difficulties attracting candidates from outside the local area. District leaders noted that the district’s homogeneity, geographic location, and lack of public transit can make it more difficult to attract candidates from different backgrounds. As one district leader shared,

If I’m a student of color, I probably don’t have an administrator I can look to and [see myself reflected] or if I’m a multilingual learner, I won’t be able to interact with a building leader who speaks English as a second language.

To address this concern, MERSD has focused on cultural competency training to help staff recognize bias and foster a more inclusive environment. The district has worked with Michael Eatman of Culture 7 Consulting for the past four years to uncover and address biases. These efforts, although ongoing, reflect the district’s commitment to making strides toward greater diversity in leadership roles.

Despite these recruitment challenges, MERSD’s hiring process remains thorough and collaborative, which is a strength of the district’s approach. School leaders are empowered to handle hiring within their buildings, and one explained, “We hire our own staff . . . form committees, screen applicants, hold interviews, check references, make offers, and evaluate once they’re here.” The district aims to involve multiple perspectives in the hiring process, with school leaders emphasizing the inclusion of parents and community members in hiring committees. As one leader noted, “We have community members and parents on hiring committees.” This inclusive approach helps foster a sense of shared responsibility for hiring decisions. However, some parents have expressed concerns about the limited opportunities for engagement. Although they were eager to participate in the hiring process, several parents reported being told that opportunities for parent engagement were already filled. After the principal and hiring committee select a candidate, the principal submits a Request for Hire to the human resources department, which reviews the request before forwarding it to the superintendent for final approval. The human resources manager provides direct, individualized support to candidates by walking them through required paperwork, payroll setup, benefits enrollment, and background check procedures.

MERSD has a structured onboarding experience designed to be supportive for new staff. District staff meet with each new hire to guide them through paperwork and benefits. Before the school year begins, new staff attend a two-day orientation in which the superintendent welcomes them and introduces them to administrators and colleagues. “The superintendent will come and welcome them. . . . Our building administrators come, so all new hires get to meet all the administrators and have lunch together,” explained a district leader. This onboarding process is a strength as it aims to support new hires and integrate them into the district culture from day one, providing them with a solid foundation for success.

Teacher evaluations at MERSD align with state guidelines and contractual agreements and serve both accountability and professional development purposes. During their probationary period, teachers undergo multiple formal observations to assess their performance. As one teacher

explained, “Evaluations follow a state-mandated rubric that clearly defines performance expectations, ranging from unsatisfactory to exemplary,” while a school leader added, “It’s very clearly laid out, and we follow those guidelines.” This clear structure for formal evaluations supports consistent expectations for teachers across the district. In addition, the district invests in professional development for school leaders to help them calibrate their observations and feedback. This initiative aims to promote consistency in evaluation practices across schools.

However, areas for improvement remain, particularly with department heads who conduct formative evaluations in the high school but have not received the same training as school leaders. As one department head noted, “I was given no guidance on what to look for in evaluations,” raising concerns about consistency in the evaluation process. In addition, some teachers have reported different evaluation experiences across schools, with one stating, “I feel like my personal experience [with evaluations] is not the same as everyone’s.”

Additionally, informal observations and walkthroughs vary in frequency and purpose across schools, which is an area for growth. In some cases, teachers initiate informal observations, seeking feedback on specific instructional strategies or wishing to showcase a lesson. One school leader described this practice, noting, “We have a lot of staff members that will invite us into classrooms for a specific thing . . . maybe that, or if they are doing something that they want to showcase.” However, in other instances, informal observations occur more sporadically. Another administrator noted, “We do walkthroughs . . . I would say, monthly, every couple of months, depending.” Although some teachers value the flexibility of informal observations, other teachers expressed a desire for more consistent administrative visibility, suggesting that it would enhance support for teachers. One teacher commented, “I think they do a great job with evaluations, but if they could pop in a little bit more... or even just be a little bit more visible at times... just to show they’re here to support us and see what’s going on.”

This inconsistency in informal observations has raised concerns about the district’s ability to support struggling educators. Some teachers believe that when administrators do not conduct frequent informal observations, they may miss early signs of performance issues. In addition, some educators have pointed out gaps in the formal evaluation process, especially when teachers who are struggling are not adequately supported. Others, particularly in departmentalized settings in which teachers collaborate closely on student learning and share responsibility for student progress, noted how a lack of administrative visibility can impact team dynamics. As one teacher explained, “Sometimes I wish that there was a little bit more oversight for some teachers that need a little bit more oversight, because it impacts everyone else.”

Administrators provide feedback through the Vector Solutions (formerly TeachPoint) system as part of formal evaluations, allowing teachers to review and comment on their evaluations. Some teachers find this feedback constructive, while others believe that follow-up support could be more consistent. One teacher described the benefit of written feedback, stating, “It’s a narrative as well . . . and it really does kind of lead to conversation.” Teachers noted that regular check-ins could enhance the usefulness of this feedback. One teacher shared, “I think in years past we used to [have regular feedback check-ins]. I don’t think it’s as common [now].” Another agreed, saying, “Yeah, I think it’s

kind of by request, on either end. Like the principal could ask, 'I'd like to have a talk,' or you could say, 'I'd like to talk about the feedback.'"

Teachers who participated in peer observations highly valued them, but they were not widely implemented in MERSD. Many teachers expressed a desire for more opportunities to observe and learn from their colleagues, yet logistical barriers such as scheduling conflicts and substitute teacher availability have made it difficult to establish a consistent practice. One middle school teacher noted, "I would love to do more observations. . . . I get so much out of it." Some schools have encouraged new teachers to observe veteran educators, peer observations are not yet a routine practice. One teacher pointed out, "We are kind of siloed here . . . so that could be helpful just to be able to see and interact with each other."

AIR used simple random sampling to select the sample of 10 teachers due for summative evaluations for the 2023-2024 school year. All teachers selected for review (100 percent) had a complete summative evaluation available, which included a rating for each standard or an overall rating. Nearly all (nine) evaluation documents reviewed included a student learning SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goal and a professional practice SMART goal. In addition, leaders evaluated all the teachers' progress toward their student learning and professional goals. All reviewed evaluations included multiple sources of evidence, such as observations, student work samples, or other evidence to support progress toward student learning goals, professional learning goals, standards, and indicators. All summative evaluations included feedback for each standard and overall feedback related to each teacher's overall rating. Although all evaluations included feedback naming strengths or practices that the teacher should continue, only two of 10 evaluations included feedback indicating areas for growth.

Administrator evaluations are also recorded in Vector Solutions, according to district records. Of the eight administrative district staff who were due for a summative evaluation for the 2023-2024 school year, seven evaluations were available for review. Of those seven evaluations, six were complete with performance ratings and assessment of progress toward goals. Most (six) evaluations included student learning and professional practice SMART goals, and four included a school improvement SMART goal or multiple sources of evidence to assess performance on summative evaluation standards. All seven evaluations included feedback for each standard, which included comments with specific, actionable feedback naming each administrator's strengths. However, only one evaluation identified areas for growth for administrative district staff.

Taken together, the review of teacher and administrator evaluations highlights that a strength of the district is in highlighting areas of strength through the evaluation process for teachers. This evidence also highlights an area for growth for the district, as it is not consistently providing feedback for administrators and teachers and articulating areas for growth for all staff to foster continuous improvement.

Recognition of staff achievements is another strength of MERSD. The district celebrates longevity at the start of each school year, acknowledging staff milestones and long-term service. "We do longevity celebrations at the start. . . . There's a recognition of staff who have served certain benchmarks of their career," one participant explained. Furthermore, staff members regularly highlight each other's accomplishments, creating a culture of peer recognition. A district leader

shared, “Sometimes that recognition is shout-outs from leaders in their newsletters.” These practices foster a positive work environment in which staff feel valued and appreciated.

Teacher retention at MERSD is a notable strength, with a retention rate of 93% in 2024, 7 percentage points above the state average of 86%. Teachers attribute this to factors such as competitive salaries, a strong teacher contract, and the district’s supportive work environment. One teacher union representative emphasized, “We have a pretty strong contract . . . so I think that allows us to retain a lot of great teachers.” Teachers also value the district’s commitment to work-life balance, with one educator saying, “[The district] help[s] us maintain that work-life balance. I feel very supported in that way.” Instructional coaches and department heads contribute to teacher retention by providing ongoing instructional support, mentoring, and content-specific guidance. While informal feedback from administrators can vary in consistency, these more formal supports help educators feel confident and effective in their roles. Whereas low turnover and consistent district priorities reflect leadership stability at MERSD, teachers also value the superintendent’s approachability and accessibility, with one teacher noting, “Because we’re a smaller district, there’s not a lot of red tape or go-betweens between the teachers and the superintendent. . . . She’s usually pretty responsive.”

## Professional Learning

MERSD’s commitment to teacher leadership and ongoing professional development is a notable strength, reflected in its Mentor and Induction Program, leadership opportunities, and support for continuous learning. The program includes monthly seminars on teaching standards and pairs mentors with new teachers on the basis of content areas and roles. New teachers meet with their mentors for at least 35 hours over the course of the year. One teacher shared, “They [find] someone that closely [aligns] with what the teacher’s going to be doing and established in the district.” Teachers appreciate the district’s structured mentoring program, with one teacher stating, “I’m really happy with the direction that the mentor program has gone in this year . . . very structured.” Ongoing mentor training helps maintain the effectiveness of the program. One teacher noted,

If you want to be a mentor, you have to go through the training program. . . . You need to keep up your studies on that, you have to renew it, and then if you’re interested in being a mentor, you apply.

In addition to providing mentorship, the district offers leadership opportunities such as department heads and curriculum leadership teams. District leaders and teachers agree that there are leadership opportunities available to teachers across the district. A district leader pointed out, “There are quite a few opportunities for leadership roles that allow teachers to stay in the classroom.” Teacher focus groups revealed that the district supports teachers’ ongoing education by approving coursework that results in earning qualifying credits that can be applied toward an increase in salary, allowing educators to further their skills.

The 2024-2025 MERSD Professional Learning Plan emphasizes key areas such as authentic learning, social-emotional development, and inclusive school culture. The district offers differentiated professional development to staff that aligns with the district’s strategic priorities focused on establishing and fostering an authentic learning environment, integrating social-

emotional learning, and celebrating and nurturing an inclusive and diverse school culture. Educators can participate in various training sessions, including those focused on culturally responsive teaching, inquiry-based learning, and the integration of artificial intelligence in education. One teacher shared, “There are lots of those book studies going,” highlighting the range of professional development opportunities available. The district also offers specialized training in areas such as Universal Design for Learning, social-emotional learning, and executive functioning, which are valuable for meeting the diverse needs of students.

The MERSD Professional Development Council is notable, as it represents a collaborative and representative body focused on providing alignment between professional learning, staff needs, and district priorities. According to focus groups, the membership is comprised of teachers and district leadership, including the director of curriculum and instructional technology. The council works to identify topics and formats for professional development that reflect the needs and interests of staff. Some educators noted a desire to ensure that professional development offerings are fully aligned across levels. Specifically, the connection between district initiatives and building-based sessions can feel unclear. One school leader explained, “Sometimes it can feel a little bit disjointed,” particularly when building-based professional development does not fully align with districtwide initiatives. Furthermore, some teachers raised concerns about the sustainability of professional development programs, given the reliance on colleagues to lead sessions. Many teachers appreciate the opportunity to learn from their colleagues, with one teacher explaining, “It adds to the buy-in and just the overall environment of an afternoon PD [professional development session] when you’re being presented with information from a colleague who is an expert in an area.” However, one teacher explained, “It’s reliant on our colleagues wanting to take on the role of being the leader of a professional development [session].”

Grade-level and subject-area teams have structured opportunities for collaboration, but the frequency and format of these meetings vary across schools. At MMES and EES, grade-level teams meet weekly, whereas middle school teams convene several times per week to coordinate instruction and discuss student progress. In contrast, subject-area teams meet less frequently — monthly at the middle school and without set times at the high school — which some teachers find challenging. One high school teacher described this as “always a struggle.” Unlike their elementary and middle school counterparts, high school teachers have monthly department meetings but do not have weekly common planning time, making collaboration efforts difficult, which is an area for growth.

Teachers have shared mixed perspectives on the quality and effectiveness of collaboration time. Although many teachers value the time set aside for collaboration, logistical issues sometimes hinder the process. One teacher explained, “We had other stuff to do at the same time . . . meet with your team, fill out a bunch of boxes for an hour, and then vertically align.” Some teachers also noted that Wednesday afternoon meetings, which are designated for collaboration, often get interrupted by announcements, leaving limited time for meaningful discussions. One educator mentioned, “There’s been, you know, a half hour of announcements, and then we have a half hour to get together, and then it’s like, ‘Okay, wait till next month.’”

In response to these challenges, some schools are piloting new tools to improve collaboration, such as shared spreadsheets for Grades 6-8, in which teachers input lesson plans, assessments, and key activities. This shared document helps educators align their teaching across subjects. One teacher explained,

You're supposed to put what you're doing in that class for that week, what assessments you have. . . . We'll be able to look at that and say, "Oh, I'm doing this in eighth-grade English. The seventh, the sixth-grade social studies teacher is doing this thing. Maybe we could find some way to align."

This initiative is still in its early stages, but educators are hopeful that it will lead to more effective interdisciplinary collaboration.

## Recommendations

- *The district should continue its efforts to accurately and consistently code employee data in Aspen.*
- *The district should develop and implement a coherent plan for recruiting and retaining leaders of color.*
- *The district should emphasize the importance and utility of regular, informal classroom observations with school leaders and work with them to identify and mitigate barriers.*
- *The district should train evaluators to incorporate greater levels of constructive feedback on evaluations for both teachers and administrators.*
- *Where feasible, the district should establish regular, scheduled common planning time for high school teachers to support consistent collaboration and coordination across subject-area teams.*

## Financial and Asset Management

This section focuses on the extent to which, through its policies, systems, and procedures, the district strategically allocates and uses funding and other resources in alignment with applicable laws to improve all students' performance, opportunities, and outcomes. It also focuses on the ways in which the district collaborates with its partners to run daily operations, manage its assets, and develop long-term plans for sustainability.

Table 4 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management in MERSD.

**Table 4. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard**

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
<a href="#"><u>Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business office is staffed with highly qualified personnel, including a full-time director of finance and operations, financial analyst, accounts payable clerk, and human resources manager.</li> </ul>	
<a href="#"><u>Budgeting and Budget Process</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators have access to additional funding through mini grants provided by PTOs.</li> <li>The district uses a transparent budgeting process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a long-term plan to address the budget gaps</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Operations</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has an established process for procurement and effectively manages contracts, producing cost savings and compliance with state laws.</li> </ul>	
<a href="#"><u>Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district has a detailed capital plan informed by facility assessments and input from various stakeholders.</li> <li>The district is proactive in monitoring and planning for capital needs.</li> </ul>	

### Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure

The business office is staffed with qualified personnel, which is a strength of the district. According to reports from district leaders, the business office has sufficient staff to support daily operations and annual planning. A district leader explained, "it's staffed much more robustly than it ever has [been] in the past," in that staff have the necessary credentials and expertise to support the office's functions. The district has a full-time financial analyst who is responsible for processing payroll, a full-time accounts payable clerk [who] also handles accounts receivable because we're a regional district. . . . And we also have a [full-time] HR [human resources] manager. Reporting to the director of finance and operations are leaders supporting transportation, facilities, and school lunch. In addition, the director of finance and operations is a certified municipal government accountant, and is well versed in Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System accounting guidelines.

The business office has comprehensive written policies and procedures that outline ongoing work and are designed to maintain compliance with state and federal requirements, establish an internal system of checks and balances, and provide continuity to operations when staffing disruptions arise. For example, the MERSD school committee has an online policy manual available on the district's website. The manual includes a section on fiscal management with written policies that outline ongoing work and actions to comply with related state and federal requirements. Also, documents posted on the district's website lay out the budget basics and timeline.

The district uses ERP Pro (formerly Infinite Visions) to monitor and control resources. ERP Pro is an enterprise resource planning solution provided by Tyler Technologies. The software is tailored to the unique requirements of K-12 school districts, managing aspects such as student data, payroll, budgeting, and purchasing within the educational context.

The district is currently in the process of moving to an electronic system for records management. Hard copies of all documents are kept either in a storage room adjacent to the business office or, for older items, in a rented storage room. MERSD, rather than the town, is responsible for preserving the records. The business office checks the state's retention schedule regularly and before destroying any records to comply with the Massachusetts statewide record retention schedule. Completing the transition to an electronic records system, rather than relying on a mix of electronic and hard copy records, to improve efficiency and accessibility

Although the district handles contracts, payroll, health insurance, onboarding, and employee management, a town leader explained that town officials and the superintendent have had conversations about the possibility of working together to regionalize some services and operations. Currently, there are only a few situations in which the entities work together outside of the towns providing revenues to cover local expenses. For example, the school district covers the expense of a police officer from Manchester who serves as a school resource officer for 9 months a year.

District staff and town officials described their working relationship as mostly positive but pointed out some tensions as it relates to budget approach and funding. District leaders explained that they meet monthly with school committee members and town managers and chairs of the boards of selectmen of both Manchester and Essex. They also explained that they are "always in contact with each other about anything else that comes up." However, town officials described tension in the relationship between the two towns as it relates to the approach to the budget. School committee members explained: "We have two towns who are both in different financial situations and have two . . . differing philosophies on how they pay for town services."

## **Budgeting and Budget Process**

According to DESE data, the district's fiscal year 2024 net school spending was \$27,237,198, which exceeded its net school spending requirements by \$12,025,531, or 79.1 percent over its required net school spending of \$15,211,667. That fiscal year, in-district expenditures per pupil were \$25,121 in the district. Because of the assessment formula, which is based on enrollment, population, and the equalized valuation of the two towns, Manchester pays approximately two thirds of the district's budget and Essex pays one third.

District budget documents clearly identify funding sources associated with grants, school choice funds, regional transportation reimbursement, and reserve funds. Staffing makes up the largest expense category. The average teacher salary in fiscal year 2023 was \$101,657, which is higher than the state average of \$89,576. District leaders added that the district budgets for anticipated out-of-district special education placements and related transportation costs from the operating budget, school choice funds, and Circuit Breaker funds. A district leader explained that to cover other unexpected expenses, the district would look to see if they have budget efficiencies in particular accounts that have been realized over the year. The school committee would vote to transfer funds from one budget category to another if money is needed for a spending category that does not have sufficient funds. School leaders agree that they have support from the district leaders and the school committee to re-allocate resources “based on need in any given year.”

According to school leaders and teachers, the district’s budget provides appropriate levels of funding for key instructional resources. Regarding the allocation of special education supports, an elementary school teacher explained, “It’s equitable. . . . It’s just the needs are greater at Memorial [MMES] because we have more specialized programs over there. But if [the programs] were in Essex, it would be the same.” Teacher focus group respondents indicated that teachers have access to instructional materials. One teacher explained,

I think sometimes if there are things that we might want that go above and beyond what we have, we have avenues that we can seek out. Our PTO [parent teacher organization] does these things called mini grants. So, if our principal says it’s okay . . . then we can seek additional funds for some other things that we might want or need in our classrooms.

Elementary focus group respondents agreed that application process for the mini grants is easy. To apply for the mini grant, a teacher would write a grant proposal that describes how the grant would support intended educational goals and outcomes. The grant is reviewed to determine if the request would advance student learning and once approved the funds are immediately available. Educator access to additional funding through PTO support is a strength of the district.

A strength of the district is that it uses a transparent budgeting process. The district’s website posts published meeting presentations and detailed budget documents. The district publishes an annual budget calendar that lays out critical meeting dates and milestones for the budget. District leaders described the budgeting process as starting between mid-October and early November and involving all the principals and directors in considering their needs in the coming year. In mid-November, principals and directors submit budget worksheets with their requests for the following year—including positions, supplies, or other budgetary adjustments—with justification for each request. According to a district leader, with this information, the director of finance and operations puts together the tentative budget to present to the school committee—with a first hearing taking place in December. The superintendent and director of finance and operations continue to refine the budget as new information (e.g., staffing requirements, health insurance costs) becomes available. The school committee typically votes on a final budget in February or early March, though that date has been pushed out the past two years. During this process, the district leaders stay in touch with the town administrators, the board of selectmen chairs, and the town’s finance committees. At the end of April and early May, the towns vote on the school budget at annual town meetings. In addition, the district

has contracted with ClearGov, a publisher of online budget 'books,' to host the budget schedule in fiscal year 2026 to further enhance budget transparency.

As part of the budgeting process, district leaders reported that they review enrollment projections and rely on the director of curriculum and instructional technology, the superintendent, and other directors to provide guidance on program needs and evaluate the efficacy of previous investments to create the basis for budget requests. In addition, district leaders use a projection model to budget five years out, and the model incorporates past performance. District leaders and school committee members agree that the review and approval process is timely and culminates in an easily accessible, publicly available budget book.

District leaders shared that they apply for state and federal grants that align with the district's strategic plan. Budget documents corroborate this. A system is in place to support the district in meeting all grant terms and requirements. For example, the director of finance and operations, the financial analyst, and the manager of each grant meet monthly to make sure that the district is complying with the grants' requirements and the funds are being spent. District leaders explained that most of the grants are entitlement grants and are expected to continue.

The district has a multiyear financial plan that incorporates projected enrollment and required staffing, insurance and benefits, cost-of-living adjustments set in its collective bargaining agreements, and anticipated increases in its service contracts (e.g., transportation, technology). One district leader explained,

We know what our staffing costs are through our collective bargaining agreement with our teachers and our teaching assistants union through 2027. So, we know what the contractual salary rates are [and] we have built in a projection of all other costs based on what the trends have been over the past five to 10 years.

District leaders explained that they work with budget managers to track and adjust current year spending. In addition, district leaders explained that the district provides budget updates to the school committee three to four times per year, which is further evidenced by school committee meeting minutes. The first update is to the two-member finance subcommittee. The spending report then goes to the larger school committee for review. The district will share the information with the town and post it on the district website. In addition, the district hires independent financial auditing services each year and implements recommendations from those audits in a timely manner.

Despite multiple focus groups agreeing that there is an adequate budget that meets and even exceeds needs, the district has had issues meeting the funding needs of the programming provided in the district. School committee focus group respondents agree that the district has been unsustainably using reserves since approximately 2020 to cover budget gaps. Focus group respondents further explained that reserves have been used to "patch the gap between basically the highest assessment that we can get passed with the towns and the cost of the educational program that our constituents...expect." Massachusetts law requires regional governance structures to have their budgets approved by a majority of member towns, and costs are apportioned based on

enrollment, population, and property valuation as defined in the regional agreement. This structure, however, can lead to funding challenges with municipalities having differing philosophies and abilities to spend on schools. Two years ago, Essex voted on an override, which would have allowed the town to raise property taxes over the 2.5 percent cap determined by Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts. Despite support from the school committee, it did not pass. This year, the same situation occurred, but Essex did pass the override (after the review took place). Even with the override, though, there is no long-term plan to address the budget gap which is an area for growth.

## Operations

District operations are spread across several departments that come together to support school transportation, food services, technology, and vendor contractors. Typically, if a student lives in Essex, they attend EES, and if they live in Manchester, they attend MMES. However, according to district leaders, the regional agreement allows for district wide programs for students with special needs and students can attend the school where the services or program is held. For example, an Essex student who needs a language-based class would attend MMES. The district website provides families with access to school registration information and forms.

According to school and district leaders, a formal process is in place for requesting and responding to maintenance services. School leaders explained that there is a process for submitting work orders, and elementary and high school teachers expressed their views that the buildings are safe, well lit, clean, and well maintained. School leaders also explained that the district employs one head custodian and contracts out to a cleaning company for all other custodial services.

According to district leaders, the district provides staff and K-8 students with the hardware, software, and related licenses and support for everyday learning and daily operations. High school students are responsible for bringing their own computers to school, but there are computers to borrow for students without access. Teachers agreed that this is the case and spoke highly of the technology staff who support students and staff when issues arise.

District staff explained that the district has an established process for purchasing supplies and services in alignment with state laws and effectively manages those contracts with vendors. The district procures most supplies and services through either the state contract or collaborative purchasing agreements. The director of finance and operations will review contracts to make sure that the district is compliant with procurement requirements. All purchases are reviewed for accuracy prior to approval.

District staff added that the district executes and manages contracts with its vendors and has established timelines to proactively track the end of contracts to provide sufficient time for renewal or rebidding for core district services. According to a district staff member, the district monitors when contracts will expire and whether a desired contract extension is allowable by the contract or if the district needs to rebid. One district staff member explained that they are “constantly looking at what we need to bid for the upcoming year, or if we have a year-to-year contract, does it make sense to put something out to bid for a cost savings measure?” They also shared an example:

For our snow removal, I’m looking at astronomical costs, even though we haven’t really had much of a winter. So, I’m planning on putting that out to bid this summer. . . . And most of

those types of contracts are through facilities, and the facilities manager and myself will meet to see what we need to address each year.

## Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning

The district is proactive in monitoring and planning for capital needs, which is a strength of the district. A capital plan has been developed by the district that describes future capital needs, is based on future enrollment projections and facility assessments, and incorporates input from the facilities manager, the superintendent, principals, and school committee members if they have any concerns, which is a strength of the district. Recent capital requests include interactive whiteboard replacement at the middle and high school, history/social science curriculum materials, supplemental writing curriculum materials, a water heater replacement at the middle school, reshingling of the facilities barn roof, and an air conditioning study at the middle/high school, to name a few. According to district leaders, the facilities manager and the director of finance and operations develop the capital plan with input from district staff and an outside consultant, Habeeb and Associates. Habeeb and Associates conducts a thorough inventory of the buildings and generates a plan. A district leader explained,

That's a big piece of what informs our capital plan, because they look at the big pieces of the buildings, the envelope, the physical plant, the HVAC systems, the roofs. . . . They give us a multiyear look at what the large-scale investments are that are going to be needed to keep the buildings operable, safe, and compliant.

A district leader explained they use an Excel workbook referred to as their “capital asset listing,” with depreciation, to manage and track its inventory of capital assets and critical supplies. The district updates the capital asset listing annually and reviews it with auditors to guarantee proper tracking. The district’s network manager manages information technology equipment. With respect to the replacement or disposal of goods, district staff indicated that their district has a system for tracking these needs. A district leader explained that contracts for core district services are managed using a system that relies on final approval from the director of finance and operations. The director of finance and operations maintains records of contract renewals, extensions, rebids, and expiration using a central file.

## Recommendations

- *The district should develop and implement a sustainable long-term financial plan to address budget gaps and reduce reliance on reserves for funding educational programs.*

## Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

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The AIR team completed the following as part of the district review activities in Manchester Essex Regional School District. The team conducted 60 classroom observations during the week of January 27, 2025, and held interviews and focus groups between January 27 and January 30. The site visit team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the school and the district:

- Superintendent
- Other district leaders
- School committee members
- Teachers' association members
- Principals
- Teachers
- Parents
- Town representative

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

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

# Appendix B. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

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*Manchester Essex  
Regional School District*

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

**Districtwide Instructional Observation Report**

January 2025

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## Introduction

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

Four observers visited Manchester Essex Regional School District during the week of January 27, 2025. Observers conducted 60 observations in a sample of classrooms across four schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

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

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

**Table 1. CLASS K–3 Domains and Dimensions**

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Positive Climate</li> <li>■ Negative Climate</li> <li>■ Teacher Sensitivity</li> <li>■ Regard for Student Perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Behavior Management</li> <li>■ Productivity</li> <li>■ Instructional Learning Formats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Concept Development</li> <li>■ Quality of Feedback</li> <li>■ Language Modeling</li> </ul>

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

**Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions**

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Positive Climate</li> <li>■ Teacher Sensitivity</li> <li>■ Regard for Student Perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Behavior Management</li> <li>■ Productivity</li> <li>■ Negative Climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Instructional Learning Formats</li> <li>■ Content Understanding</li> <li>■ Analysis and Inquiry</li> <li>■ Quality of Feedback</li> <li>■ Instructional Dialogue</li> </ul>
<b>Student Engagement</b>		

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

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

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

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

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

## Positive Climate

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*Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12*

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

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

**Positive Climate District Average\*: 5.4**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	5.4
Grades K-5	0	0	2	1	8	6	3	20	5.4
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	2	7	5	6	20	5.8
Grades 9-12	0	0	2	4	6	6	2	20	5.1

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as:  $([3 \times 4] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 21] + [6 \times 17] + [7 \times 11]) \div 60 \text{ observations} = 5.4$

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

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

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

## Teacher Sensitivity

*Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12*

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

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

**Teacher Sensitivity District Average\*: 6.0**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Grades K-5	0	0	1	0	4	8	7	20	6.0
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	2	10	7	20	6.2
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	2	7	4	7	20	5.8

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as:  $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 13] + [6 \times 22] + [7 \times 21]) \div 60 \text{ observations} = 6.0$

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

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

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

## Regard for Student Perspectives

*Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12*

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

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

**Regard for Student Perspectives District Average\*: 4.1**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	4.1
Grades K-5	0	0	7	2	8	1	2	20	4.5
Grades 6-8	0	6	0	3	6	3	2	20	4.3
Grades 9-12	1	6	4	3	4	1	1	20	3.5

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as:  $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 12] + [3 \times 11] + [4 \times 8] + [5 \times 18] + [6 \times 5] + [7 \times 5]) \div 60$  observations = 4.1

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

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

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

## Negative Climate

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Emotional Support domain, Grades K–3

Classroom Organization domain, Grades 4–12

Negative Climate reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are key to this dimension (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 28, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 55, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 55). For the purposes of this report, we have inversed the observers scores, to be consistent with the range scores across all dimensions. Therefore, a high range score in this dimension indicates an absence of negative climate, and a low range score indicates the presence of negative climate.<sup>4</sup>

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

**Negative Climate District Average\*: 7.0**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	7.0
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	0	2	18	20	6.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	7.0
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	7.0

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as:  $[(6 \times 2) + (7 \times 58)] \div 60 \text{ observations} = 7.0$

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> When observers rate this dimension it is scored so that a low rating (indicating little or no evidence of a negative climate) is better than a high rating (indicating abundant evidence of a negative climate). To be consistent across all ratings, for the purposes of this report we have inversed this scoring.

## Behavior Management

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Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

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

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

**Behavior Management District Average\*: 6.7**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	20	6.7
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	2	5	13	20	6.6
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	3	17	20	6.9

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as:  $([5 \times 3] + [6 \times 12] + [7 \times 45]) \div 60$  observations = 6.7

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

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

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

## Productivity

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Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

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

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

**Productivity District Average\*: 6.5**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	6.5
Grades K-5	0	0	0	1	4	5	10	20	6.2
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	2	8	10	20	6.4
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	1	19	20	7.0

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as:  $([4 \times 1] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 14] + [7 \times 39]) \div 60 \text{ observations} = 6.5$

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

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

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

## Instructional Learning Formats

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–3

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12

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

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

**Instructional Learning Formats District Average\*: 5.5**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	5.5
Grades K-5	0	1	0	1	5	10	3	20	5.6
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	10	5	4	20	5.6
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	3	8	5	3	20	5.3

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as:  $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 1] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 23] + [6 \times 20] + [7 \times 10]) \div 60 \text{ observations} = 5.5$

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

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

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

## Concept Development

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*Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3*

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

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

**Concept Development District Average\*: 2.9**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	14	2.9
Grades K-3**	0	4	8	1	1	0	0	14	2.9

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as:  $([2 \times 4] + [3 \times 8] + [4 \times 1] + [5 \times 1]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 2.9$

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

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

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

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

## Content Understanding

*Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12*

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

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

**Content Understanding District Average\*: 4.9**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	46	4.9
Grades 4-5**	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	6	3.7
Grades 6-8	0	1	1	4	6	5	3	20	5.1
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	8	5	2	4	20	5.0

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as:  $([2 \times 2] + [3 \times 4] + [4 \times 14] + [5 \times 11] + [6 \times 8] + [7 \times 7]) \div 46 \text{ observations} = 4.9$

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

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

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

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

## Analysis and Inquiry

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

### Analysis and Inquiry District Average\*: 3.3

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	46	3.3
Grades 4-5**	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	6	2.3
Grades 6-8	6	5	2	5	1	1	0	20	2.7
Grades 9-12	2	1	7	3	0	2	5	20	4.2

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as:  $([1 \times 8] + [2 \times 10] + [3 \times 11] + [4 \times 8] + [5 \times 1] + [6 \times 3] + [7 \times 5]) \div 46 \text{ observations} = 3.3$

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

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

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

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

## Quality of Feedback

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*Instructional Support domain, Grades K–12*

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

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

**Quality of Feedback District Average\*: 3.4**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	60	3.4
Grades K-5	3	6	1	4	1	4	1	20	3.5
Grades 6-8	2	7	4	0	3	3	1	20	3.4
Grades 9-12	2	4	8	3	1	1	1	20	3.2

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as:  $([1 \times 7] + [2 \times 17] + [3 \times 13] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 5] + [6 \times 8] + [7 \times 3]) \div 60 \text{ observations} = 3.4$

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

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

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

## Language Modeling

*Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3*

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

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

**Language Modeling District Average\*: 3.8**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	14	3.8
Grades K-3**	0	3	4	3	2	1	1	14	3.8

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as:  $([2 \times 3] + [3 \times 4] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 2] + [6 \times 1] + [7 \times 1]) \div 14 \text{ observations} = 3.8$

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

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

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

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

## Instructional Dialogue

*Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12*

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

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

**Instructional Dialogue District Average\*: 3.7**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	46	3.7
Grades 4-5**	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	6	3.2
Grades 6-8	6	2	1	3	2	4	2	20	3.7
Grades 9-12	0	2	7	6	1	3	1	20	4.0

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as:  $([1 \times 7] + [2 \times 6] + [3 \times 8] + [4 \times 10] + [5 \times 5] + [6 \times 7] + [7 \times 3]) \div 46 \text{ observations} = 3.7$

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

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

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

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

## Student Engagement

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*Student Engagement domain, Grades 4–12*

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

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

**Student Engagement District Average\*: 5.7**

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Grades 4-5**	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	6	5.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	5	11	3	20	5.8
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	3	6	3	7	20	5.6

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as:  $([3 \times 2] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 13] + [6 \times 16] + [7 \times 11]) \div 46 \text{ observations} = 5.7$

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

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

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

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

## Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>Emotional Support Domain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Positive Climate	0	0	2	1	8	6	3	20	5.4
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	2	18	20	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	1	0	4	8	7	20	6.0
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	0	7	2	8	1	2	20	4.5
<b>Classroom Organization Domain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.2</b>
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	20	6.7
Productivity	0	0	0	1	4	5	10	20	6.2
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	1	0	1	5	10	3	20	5.6
<b>Instructional Support Domain</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Concept Development (K-3 only)	0	4	8	1	1	0	0	14	2.9
Content Understanding (UE only)	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	6	3.7
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	6	2.3
Quality of Feedback	3	6	1	4	1	4	1	20	3.5
Language Modeling (K-3 only)	0	3	4	3	2	1	1	14	3.8
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	6	3.2
<b>Student Engagement (UE only)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5.3</b>

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as:  $([3 \times 2] + [4 \times 1] + [5 \times 8] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 3]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 5.4$

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment:  $([6 \times 2] + [7 \times 18]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 6.9$ . In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

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

## Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average Scores *
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>Emotional Support Domain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Positive Climate	0	0	0	2	7	5	6	20	5.8
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	1	2	10	7	20	6.2
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	6	0	3	6	3	2	20	4.3
<b>Classroom Organization Domain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	2	5	13	20	6.6
Productivity	0	0	0	0	2	8	10	20	6.4
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	7.0
<b>Instructional Support Domain</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	0	1	10	5	4	20	5.6
Content Understanding	0	1	1	4	6	5	3	20	5.1
Analysis and Inquiry	6	5	2	5	1	1	0	20	2.7
Quality of Feedback	2	7	4	0	3	3	1	20	3.4
Instructional Dialogue	6	2	1	3	2	4	2	20	3.7
<b>Student Engagement</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5.8</b>

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as:  $([4 \times 2] + [5 \times 7] + [6 \times 5] + [7 \times 6]) \div 20$  observations = 5.8

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment:  $([7 \times 20]) \div 20$  observations = 7.0

## Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average Scores *
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>Emotional Support Domain</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4.8</b>
Positive Climate	0	0	2	4	6	6	2	20	5.1
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	2	7	4	7	20	5.8
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	6	4	3	4	1	1	20	3.5
<b>Classroom Organization Domain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	0	3	17	20	6.9
Productivity	0	0	0	0	0	1	19	20	7.0
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20	7.0
<b>Instructional Support Domain</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4.3</b>
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	1	3	8	5	3	20	5.3
Content Understanding	0	0	1	8	5	2	4	20	5.0
Analysis and Inquiry	2	1	7	3	0	2	5	20	4.2
Quality of Feedback	2	4	8	3	1	1	1	20	3.2
Instructional Dialogue	0	2	7	6	1	3	1	20	4.0
<b>Student Engagement</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5.6</b>

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as:  $([3 \times 2] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 2]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 5.1$

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment:  $([7 \times 20]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 7.0$

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## Appendix C. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators

**Table C1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance**

Resource	Description
<a href="#">Coherence Guidebook</a> <sup>a</sup>	Illustrates a systems-level path toward deeper learning. School system leaders and teams may use the guidebook, along with its companion self-assessment, to articulate a vision of deeper learning, identify high-leverage instructional priorities, refine tiered supports, and leverage systems and structures—all in service of the articulated vision.
<a href="#">New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP)</a>	In partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP) is a three-year professional development program for superintendents in their first three years of their position in a Massachusetts school district. The curriculum aligns with DESE’s educational vision and supports new superintendents with developing the skills and competencies to be effective leaders of their school districts.
<a href="#">Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook</a>	A series of modules designed to support novice principals and their mentors in the development of antiracist leadership competencies aligned to the Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership.
<a href="#">Planning for Success In Massachusetts</a>	Planning for Success (PfS) is an inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support.

<sup>a</sup> The Coherence Guidebook may be useful across multiple standard areas including Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Student Support.

**Table C2. Resources to Support Human Resources and Professional Development**

Resource	Description
<a href="#">Early Literacy Observation Tool</a>	This tool supports the observation and provision of high-quality feedback to teacher candidates on their practice in evidence-based early literacy.
<a href="#">Educator Evaluation Resources</a>	A suite of resources and practical tools for effective and equitable implementation of educator evaluation, including Focus Indicators, a subset of Indicators from the Classroom Teacher and School-Level Administrator Rubrics that represent high-priority practices for the school year.
Induction and mentoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Teacher Induction and Mentoring</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Principal Induction and Mentoring</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Induction and Mentoring Annual Report</a></li> </ul>	Resources that highlight best practices and reinforce the recently updated guidelines and standards for induction and mentoring.
<a href="#">Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL)</a>	Information on MTEL exams, MTEL alternatives, and licensure requirements for educators.
<a href="#">OPTIC</a>	A professional development tool that supports Massachusetts educators to build a shared understanding of high-quality instruction and improve the feedback that teachers receive.
<a href="#">Professional Learning Partner Guide</a>	A free, online, searchable list of vetted professional development providers who have expertise in specific sets of high-quality instructional materials. Schools and districts can use this guide to easily find professional development providers to support the launch or implementation of high-quality instructional materials.
<a href="#">Promising Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies for a Diverse Massachusetts Teacher Workforce</a>	This guidebook provides a framework to help district and school leaders design and implement a teacher diversification strategy to improve student achievement and create equitable learning experiences.
<a href="#">“What to Look For” Observation Guides</a>	Observation tools to help district staff observe instruction.
<a href="#">Talent Guide</a>	An online hub of resources, considerations, and updates for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on equity.
<a href="#">WIDA Professional Development</a>	WIDA professional development provides great information and strategies to support multilingual learners in Massachusetts public schools, and WIDA PDPs satisfy educator licensure renewal requirements. These DESE-sponsored courses are available at no cost to participants and are perfect for teams of teachers seeking impactful collaboration to support students’ access to rigorous course content.

**Table C3. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management**

Resource	Description
<a href="#">General Resources for Federal Grant Programs</a>	General federal grant resources.
<a href="#">Office for Food and Nutrition Programs</a>	Resources for school districts, childcare centers, family day care homes, adult day health programs, Summer Eats community organizations, USDA Foods storage and distribution vendors, food banks, and anti-hunger organizations across the Commonwealth.
<a href="#">Planning for Success</a>	An inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support.
<a href="#">Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR)</a>	A suite of innovative data reports, case studies, and other resources that provide a new approach to resource decisions.
<a href="#">School Breakfast: Breakfast After the Bell Resources</a>	The Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit Series is designed to help with the launch and implementation of alternative breakfast models.
<a href="#">School Meals Newsletter</a>	Short articles summarizing current events, including changes in federal/state requirements, current grant opportunities, and notable dates.
<a href="#">Summer Eats   Free Meals for Kids and Teens in Massachusetts</a>	Summer Eats is a free-of-charge program that provides free meals to all kids and teens, ages 18 years and younger, at locations across Massachusetts during the summer months.

## Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

**Table D1. Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2024-2025**

Group	N (District)	Percentage of District	N (State)	Percentage of State
All Students	1,190	100.0	915,932	100.0
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0	2,272	0.2
Asian	11	0.9	68,608	7.5
Black or African American	0	0.0	93,245	10.2
Hispanic or Latino	34	2.9	236,839	25.9
Multi-Race, not Hispanic or Latino	22	1.8	42,303	4.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0	800	0.1
White	1,123	94.4	471,865	51.5

Note. As of October 1, 2024.

**Table D2. Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations, 2024-2025**

Group	N (District)	Percentage of High Needs (District)	Percentage of District	N (State)	Percentage of High Needs (State)	Percentage of State
High Needs	365	100.0	30.1	517,093	100.0	55.8
English Learners	7	1.9	0.6	127,673	24.7	13.9
Low Income	153	41.9	12.9	385,161	74.5	42.1
Students with Disabilities	237	64.9	19.6	190,967	36.9	20.6

Note. As of October 1, 2024. District and state numbers and percentages for Students with Disabilities and High Needs are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placements is 1,211; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placements is 926,057.

**Table D3. Chronic Absence <sup>a</sup> Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024**

Group	N (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All Students	1,233	16.2	13.1	9.8	19.7
African American/Black	—	10.0	—	—	22.5
Asian	12	14.3	8.3	8.3	11.8
Hispanic/Latino	34	13.6	8.0	8.8	31.3
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	19	20.0	7.1	15.8	20.6
Native American	—	—	—	—	28.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	24.3
White	1,168	16.3	13.2	9.8	14.4
High Needs	393	19.1	21.1	12.0	27.2
Low Income	187	23.4	25.6	15.0	30.3
English Learners	8	11.1	33.3	12.5	29.9
Students with Disabilities	246	17.3	17.6	11.4	27.5

<sup>a</sup> The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school.

**Table D4. Total Expenditures, Fiscal Years 2021-2023**

Expenditures	Fiscal year 2021	Fiscal year 2022	Fiscal year 2023
By school committee	\$26,044,530	\$27,305,509	\$28,128,421
By municipality	—	—	—
Total from local appropriations	\$26,044,530	\$27,305,509	\$28,128,421
From revolving funds and grants	\$2,272,867	\$3,083,190	\$3,035,293
Total expenditures	\$28,317,397	\$30,388,699	\$31,163,714

Note. Expenditures from the School Finance Dashboard sourced from [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) last updated April 2025.

**Table D5. Chapter 70 State Aid and Net School Spending, Fiscal Years 2021-2023**

Chapter 70 aid to education program	Fiscal year 2021	Fiscal year 2022	Fiscal year 2023
Chapter 70 state aid <sup>a</sup>	\$3,048,668	\$3,086,258	\$3,160,298
Required local contribution	\$11,993,491	\$11,529,683	\$11,860,322
Required net school spending <sup>b</sup>	\$15,042,159	\$14,615,941	\$15,020,620
Actual net school spending	\$25,330,963	\$26,282,056	\$27,076,975
Over/under required (\$)	\$10,288,804	\$11,666,115	\$12,056,355
Over/under required (%)	68.4%	79.8%	80.3%

Note. Chapter 70 aid to education from Chapter 70 District Profiles sourced from [Chapter 70 Program - School Finance](#) last updated August 8, 2024.

<sup>a</sup> Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations. <sup>b</sup> Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds, and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.

**Table D6. Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2021-2023**

Expenditure category	Fiscal year 2021	Fiscal year 2022	Fiscal year 2023
Administration	\$984	\$793	\$860
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,309	\$1,371	\$1,361
Teachers	\$9,058	\$9,700	\$10,308
Other teaching services	\$1,459	\$1,828	\$1,761
Professional development	\$75	\$110	\$103
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	\$458	\$405	\$405
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	\$792	\$830	\$881
Pupil services	\$1,522	\$1,941	\$1,899
Operations and maintenance	\$1,627	\$1,815	\$1,926
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	\$3,676	\$3,572	\$4,000
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$20,960	\$22,364	\$23,504

Note. Expenditures from the School Finance Dashboard sourced from [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) last updated April 2025.

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**Table E1. MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	533	60	60	53	39	34	33	40	40	6	7	7	21
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	24	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	31
Asian	6	—	—	—	62	—	—	—	29	—	—	—	10
Hispanic/Latino	14	—	54	21	20	—	31	64	44	—	15	14	36
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	7	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	17
Native American	—	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	32
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	21
White	506	61	60	53	47	33	33	40	40	6	7	7	13
High needs	189	33	32	28	22	51	49	55	45	16	18	17	33
Low income	92	43	38	33	21	44	51	55	45	13	11	12	34
ELs and former ELs	11	20	10	9	17	50	60	64	43	30	30	27	41
Students w/disabilities	118	21	25	20	11	58	50	53	40	22	25	27	50

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E2. MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	91	86	77	74	57	11	20	24	31	3	3	2	12
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	42	—	—	—	40	—	—	—	18
Asian	—	—	—	—	78	—	—	—	16	—	—	—	5
Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	36	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	26
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	61	—	—	—	30	—	—	—	9
Native American	—	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	14
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	58	—	—	—	34	—	—	—	8
White	88	85	77	76	65	11	20	22	28	3	3	2	7
High needs	25	68	32	52	37	24	56	40	41	8	12	8	23
Low income	11	76	46	73	38	18	46	27	40	6	8	0	23
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	14	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	48
Students w/disabilities	15	58	18	33	21	25	65	53	45	17	18	13	34

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E3. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	527	59	56	58	41	34	36	36	42	6	7	6	18
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	22	—	—	—	49	—	—	—	30
Asian	6	—	—	—	71	—	—	—	23	—	—	—	6
Hispanic/Latino	14	—	62	50	20	—	23	36	48	—	15	14	32
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	7	—	—	—	47	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	16
Native American	—	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	27
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	41	—	—	—	20
White	500	60	56	57	49	34	37	37	40	6	7	6	11
High needs	186	34	31	32	23	49	49	53	48	17	20	15	28
Low income	91	42	39	41	21	49	45	48	49	8	16	11	30
ELs and former ELs	11	40	20	36	21	50	40	55	46	10	40	9	33
Students w/disabilities	115	22	21	18	13	52	53	59	43	26	26	23	44

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E4. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	92	76	70	71	48	23	25	26	39	1	5	3	13
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	21
Asian	—	—	—	—	79	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	4
Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	50	—	—	—	25
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	51	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	10
Native American	—	—	—	—	33	—	—	—	54	—	—	—	13
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	10
White	89	75	71	72	58	24	24	25	35	1	5	3	7
High needs	25	46	28	48	27	50	52	40	51	4	20	12	23
Low income	11	63	38	82	27	38	31	9	50	0	31	9	23
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	14	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	40
Students w/disabilities	15	27	18	20	14	64	53	60	51	9	29	20	35

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E5. MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grades 5 and 8, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	165	65	60	62	42	30	33	32	38	5	7	5	20
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	21	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	33
Asian	1	—	—	—	64	—	—	—	26	—	—	—	9
Hispanic/Latino	3	—	—	—	21	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	36
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	49	—	—	—	34	—	—	—	17
Native American	—	—	—	—	26	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	32
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	34	—	—	—	23
White	159	66	60	62	51	31	33	32	36	4	7	6	12
High needs	57	44	42	37	24	45	38	51	44	11	20	12	32
Low income	28	54	56	43	22	43	25	54	44	4	19	4	34
ELs and former ELs	2	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	41	—	—	—	42
Students w/disabilities	34	33	23	26	15	50	49	53	38	17	28	21	46

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E6. MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	90	75	68	70	49	21	30	28	40	4	2	2	11
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	28	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	19
Asian	—	—	—	—	77	—	—	—	19	—	—	—	5
Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	26	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	22
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	10
Native American	—	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	10
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	47	—	—	—	45	—	—	—	8
White	88	74	69	70	58	22	29	27	36	4	2	2	6
High needs	25	52	43	36	28	39	48	56	52	9	10	8	20
Low income	11	69	50	73	28	25	40	27	51	6	10	0	20
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	39
Students w/disabilities	15	27	29	7	18	55	64	80	52	18	7	13	31

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E7. MCAS ELA Achievement by Grade, 2022-2024**

Grade	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
3	85	65	56	64	42	33	36	33	40	1	8	4	18
4	91	57	59	47	37	36	39	45	45	7	3	8	19
5	81	69	52	52	38	27	39	46	46	3	10	2	16
6	95	65	72	44	40	27	23	41	35	9	5	15	25
7	96	58	50	53	36	37	42	43	42	5	8	4	22
8	85	49	69	56	43	43	22	34	34	8	10	9	24
3-8	533	60	60	53	39	34	33	40	40	6	7	7	21
10	91	86	77	74	57	11	20	24	31	3	3	2	12

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E8. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Grade, 2022-2024**

Grade	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
3	85	56	42	51	44	40	45	49	35	4	13	0	20
4	91	67	71	71	46	26	25	20	38	7	4	9	16
5	80	70	47	59	40	26	45	39	46	4	8	3	14
6	94	49	57	44	40	42	38	46	43	9	5	11	17
7	95	67	54	60	37	28	36	35	44	5	10	5	19
8	82	46	65	62	38	45	30	30	42	9	6	7	19
3-8	527	59	56	58	41	34	36	36	42	6	7	6	18
10	92	76	70	71	48	23	25	26	39	1	5	3	13

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E9. MCAS Science Achievement by Grade, 2022-2024**

Grade	# included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
5	80	73	49	66	45	24	41	33	36	3	10	1	20
8	85	59	70	59	39	35	27	32	41	6	4	9	20
5 and 8	165	65	60	62	42	30	33	32	38	5	7	5	20
10	90	75	68	70	49	21	30	28	40	4	2	2	11

Note. M/E = meeting or exceeding expectations; PME = partially meeting expectations; NM = not meeting expectations.

**Table E10. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	427	53	51	50	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	49
Asian	4	—	—	—	57
Hispanic/Latino	13	—	—	—	48
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	5	—	—	—	51
Native American	—	—	—	—	48
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	51
White	405	53	51	50	50
High needs	146	48	49	46	48
Low income	68	54	51	45	47
ELs and former ELs	9	—	—	—	50
Students w/disabilities	92	44	46	45	45

**Table E11. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	83	60	59	54	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	48
Asian	—	—	—	—	55
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	47
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	50
Native American	—	—	—	—	51
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	49
White	82	60	59	55	51
High needs	22	58	50	56	47
Low income	10	—	—	—	47
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	48
Students w/disabilities	13	—	—	—	44

**Table E12. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	419	54	50	53	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	49
Asian	4	—	—	—	58
Hispanic/Latino	13	—	—	—	48
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	5	—	—	—	50
Native American	—	—	—	—	48
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	52
White	397	54	49	53	50
High needs	142	54	46	51	48
Low income	67	56	42	52	47
ELs and former ELs	9	—	—	—	50
Students w/disabilities	88	50	45	47	46

**Table E13. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	84	58	52	62	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	47
Asian	—	—	—	—	55
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	45
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	49
Native American	—	—	—	—	50
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	50
White	83	59	52	62	52
High needs	22	59	40	64	47
Low income	10	—	—	—	46
ELs and former ELs	—	—	—	—	46
Students w/disabilities	13	—	—	—	47

**Table E14. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2024**

Grade	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
3	—	—	—	—	—
4	85	56	56	59	50
5	77	52	44	53	50
6	91	55	55	42	50
7	94	49	44	48	50
8	80	54	55	52	50
3-8	427	53	51	50	50
10	83	60	59	54	50

**Table E15. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2022-2024**

Grade	# included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
3	—	—	—	—	—
4	85	62	68	70	50
5	76	53	38	42	50
6	90	32	35	37	50
7	92	73	58	57	50
8	76	46	54	59	50
3-8	419	54	50	53	50
10	84	58	52	62	50

**Table E16. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023**

Group	# included (2023)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	State 2023 (%)
All	125	93.9	98.4	98.4	89.2
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	85.6
Asian	3	—	—	—	95.2
Hispanic/Latino	—	—	—	—	78.9
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	89.3
Native American	—	—	—	—	82.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	89.9
White	121	93.8	98.4	98.3	93.0
High needs	50	87.2	95.0	96.0	82.8
Low income	39	85.2	88.2	97.4	82.2
English learners	1	—	—	—	67.3
Students w/disabilities	18	80.8	96.4	88.9	76.4

**Table E17. Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022**

Group	# included (2022)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	State 2022 (%)
All	126	99.1	94.7	98.4	91.9
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	90.1
Asian	2	—	—	—	96.9
Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	84.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	1	—	—	—	90.8
Native American	—	—	—	—	87.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	81.3
White	122	99.0	94.6	98.4	94.4
High needs	40	97.3	89.7	95.0	86.8
Low income	17	100.0	88.9	88.2	86.3
English learners	—	—	—	—	78.0
Students w/disabilities	28	94.1	84.6	96.4	81.8

**Table E18. Annual Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023**

Group	# included (2023)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	State 2023 (%)
All	416	0.2	0.2	0.2	2.1
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	2.8
Asian	6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	—	4.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	3	—	—	—	1.9
Native American	—	—	—	—	4.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	3.9
White	403	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.1
High needs	103	0.9	0.0	1.0	3.5
Low income	61	—	0.0	1.6	3.8
English learners	1	—	—	—	8.0
Students w/disabilities	52	1.5	0.0	0.0	3.0

**Table E19. In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	1,217	—	—	—	1.4
African American/Black	0	—	—	—	2.1
Asian	12	—	—	—	0.3
Hispanic/Latino	33	—	—	—	1.9
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	18	—	—	—	1.6
Native American	0	—	—	—	1.8
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	—	—	—	1.9
White	1,154	—	—	—	1.1
High needs	376	—	—	—	1.9
Low income	183	—	—	—	2.1
English learners	8	—	—	—	1.4
Students w/disabilities	229	—	—	—	2.4

**Table E20. Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	1,217	—	—	—	2.4
African American/Black	0	—	—	—	4.6
Asian	12	—	—	—	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	33	—	—	—	3.8
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	18	—	—	—	2.6
Native American	0	—	—	—	3.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	—	—	—	2.5
White	1,154	—	—	—	1.5
High needs	376	—	—	—	3.6
Low income	183	—	—	—	4.0
English learners	8	—	—	—	2.6
Students w/disabilities	229	—	—	—	4.5

**Table E21. Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024**

Group	# included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	200	77.1	76.1	78.0	67.2
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	58.2
Asian	4	—	66.7	—	86.4
Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	—	53.7
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	68.4
Native American	—	—	—	—	57.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	59.8
White	190	77.1	76.0	78.9	71.9
High needs	48	52.4	45.6	47.9	52.0
Low income	33	58.5	58.1	57.6	53.1
English learners	1	—	—	—	31.8
Students w/disabilities	22	35.7	10.0	22.7	38.5

**Table E22. Accountability Results, 2024**

School	Cumulative progress toward improvement targets (%)	Percentile	Overall classification	Reason for classification
District	60	—	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
Essex Elementary School	59	67	Not requiring assistance or intervention	School of Recognition
Manchester Memorial Elementary School	76	93	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Meeting or exceeding targets
Manchester Essex Regional Middle School	53	76	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
Manchester Essex Regional High School	74	86	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets