Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

The Standard District Review Protocol 2013

Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (ESE)
Division of Accountability, Partnership & Assistance
Center for District and School Accountability
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148
http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/accountability/dr/
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Introduction to the District Review

District Accountability and Assistance from a More Holistic Perspective

Increasingly over the past ten years, research on effective school and district leadership has highlighted a concerted districtwide focus on aligning all of the district's systems in service of student achievement. This focus is demonstrated in clear standards for performance and goals for improvement, coupled with an ongoing cyclical process for measuring progress.

To that end, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers a district review through the Center for District and School Accountability that provides an assessment of district systems, allowing district leaders to reflect on their improvement goals and strengthen performance.

The District Standards and Indicators that structure the district review offer clarity on the areas in which district capacity and excellence should be built and focused in a systemic way.

A. The District Standards and Indicators[1]

I. **Leadership, Governance and Communication**
1. Focused School Committee Governance
2. Effective District and School Leadership
3. District and School Improvement Planning
4. Educationally Sound Budget Development
5. Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention

II. **Curriculum and Instruction**
1. Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum
2. Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction
3. (Tiered instruction and) Sufficient Instructional Time

III. **Assessment**
1. Data Collection and Dissemination
2. Data-Driven Decision-Making (formerly Data-Based)
3. Student Assessment

IV. **Human Resource Management and Professional Development**
1. Staff Recruitment, Selection, Assignment
2. Supervision and Evaluation
3. Educator Development (formerly Professional Development)

[1] District Indicators are being updated and clarified in the 2012-2013 school year to reflect ESE priorities. The parenthetical phrases indicate language that has been added (where "and" is noted) or revised (where previous indicator is shown)

V. **Student Support**
   1. Academic (and Non-Academic) Support
   2. Access and Equity
   3. Educational Continuity and Student Participation
   4. Family, Community, and Partner Engagement (formerly Services & Partnerships to Support Learning)
   5. Safety

VI. **Financial and Asset Management**
   1. Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process
   2. Adequate Resources (formerly Adequate Budget)
   3. Effective Resource Management and Allocation (formerly Cost-Effective Resource Management)
   4. Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits
   5. Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

These six standards and their 24 related indicators were developed collaboratively based on input from school and district stakeholders about which systems and system components most directly impact student achievement. Reference to past district assistance tools and processes such as the Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) indicators and reviews, as well as a growing research base on the impact of effective district systems on school reform, also informed this work.

The District Standards and Indicators on which the review is based also form the foundation for the state's *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance*.

B. <u>The Framework for District Accountability and Assistance</u>

The *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance* defines and brings coherence to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's approach to engaging with districts to improve student performance. District accountability and Department assistance must be closely linked in order to produce sustainable improvement. The *Framework* defines the roles and expectations of the district and the Department based on the performance of the district's schools. Every district in the Commonwealth falls into one of five "levels," with districts requiring the *least* state intervention placed in Level 1 while districts requiring the *most* intervention are in Level 5. At each of the five levels, the *Framework* distinguishes the Department's role with respect to "accountability" and "assistance and intervention" as well as the districts' responsibilities.

Districts whose student performance and growth place them in Level 3 and 4 will be given high priority for Department assistance, including access to a district review and resources to assist their efforts to implement the Conditions for School Effectiveness (CSEs).[2]

C. The Framework for District Accountability and The Conditions for School Effectiveness (CSEs)

The Department's theory of action is that if state interventions are concentrated on ensuring that the necessary district systems are in place and are focused on establishing and sustaining the Conditions for School Effectiveness in each school, substantial gains in student performance will result. Accordingly, the *District Standards and Indicators* incorporate the Conditions for School Effectiveness (CSEs). In fact, the first Condition for School Effectiveness points to the need for the strong district systems of support and practices specified in the District Standards and Indicators.

D. The District Review as Support for a Standards-Based District Inquiry Cycle

Using the District Standards and Indicators as the touchstone, ESE's Center for District and School Accountability has developed a district review that is designed to identify the systems, policies, and practices that drive the day-to-day work of the school district, and those factors that help or hinder staff performance and ultimately student performance.

Having a district review saves the district time and adds value to the improvement cycle by providing an experienced team of district leaders who will provide an objective analysis and suggestions for improvement. The value of the district review is measured first by the reflection preparing and participating in the review promotes; second by the usefulness of the findings and recommendations to district leaders and stakeholders; third by the effectiveness of the resulting action steps and goals that the process generates; and, ultimately, by improved results. Level 3 districts not reviewed in a given year will be *required* to complete a district self-assessment process in order to revise improvement plans and strategies for implementing and monitoring the Conditions for School Effectiveness in their schools. ESE has developed a District Self-Assessment Tool based on the 6 standards and aligned to the district review process. [3]

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[2] District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2012-2013 school year include districts that were in Level 3 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest Progress and Performance Index (PPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

[3] The District Self-Assessment Tool is meant to be used by district teams to support an in-depth collaborative process to measure, track, and enhance the effectiveness of the current district systems in a way that is focused on improving student achievement and consistent with the state's expectations for accountability and assistance. The District Self-Assessment Tool delineates district systems for school support and intervention to provide districts a measurement aligned with the Conditions for School Effectiveness.

The District Review

A. A Standards-Based, Evidence-Based Process

The district review is an evidence-based process using the 6 District Standards and 24 Indicators to organize the collection and analysis of data in order to generate findings about key district systems and practices and recommendations for improvement.

To focus the analysis, reviews will collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews will seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in the district standards. The Center for District and School Accountability screens, selects, and trains experienced, independent district reviewers; provides protocols, materials, and oversight of the review process; and hands off the review findings to district stakeholders and to the Center for Targeted Assistance when further assistance and intervention is recommended.

The district reviewers review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. Material in the appendices to this protocol provide an evidence array for the review team to use to understand district policies, systems, processes, practices, and outcomes. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' association representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

B. Preparing for the District Review

More information about the specific guidelines for the site visit, documents to provide, and expectations for the review at each of the stages are in the section of the protocol below entitled "The Review Process." Preparation for the review was designed to be minimal. There is only a short list of documents to provide (many of which are likely to be on the district's website) and a 4-day site visit schedule to be completed. Districts may consider using the District Self-Assessment Tool to prepare the site visit schedule and identify documents for the review, but are not required to. CDSA also provides sample templates and letters developed to communicate with various constituencies about the review.

C. Five Stages of the District Review

The district review consists of the five stages outlined below.

1. **Document and Data Review**

For 2 days the team reviews information about the district's context, student performance, goals and processes, and resources. The Center for District and School Accountability collects information and data from ESE and from the district and provides it to the team.

- ▷ Team members are each assigned to one of the six Standards
- ▷ 6 Standards and 24 Indicators serve as "buckets" for collecting and sorting information
- ▷ The team collectively reviews data analyses
- ▷ The team reviews documents to learn about district practices
- ▷ Each team member develops and shares specific questions
- ▷ Questions for each interview are identified
- ▷ The team reviews and adjusts the onsite schedule as needed

2. **Onsite Visit**

For 4 days the review team conducts observations and asks questions about practices.

- ▷ Introductory meeting: purpose of the review and a discussion of the review process
- ▷ School Committee interviews
- ▷ District, school, and program leaders interviews
- ▷ Teachers' Association leadership interview
- ▷ Teacher focus groups
- ▷ Parent Council interviews
- ▷ School visits
- ▷ Classroom observations
- ▷ Municipal business official interviews
- ▷ Team evidence gathering and sharing throughout the visit
- ▷ Closing meeting: what the team has learned and what it needs to sort out

3. **Draft Findings and Recommendations Development and Review**

For 2 weeks the review team uses the evidence gathered from the review to generate a draft report. The Center for District and School Accountability ensures that review team members follow a strict protocol for evidence triangulation. The process consists of:

- ▷ Evidence sorting
- ▷ Team identification of priority findings
- ▷ Developing team consensus on written evidence in findings
- ▷ Collective correction of and feedback on all written draft findings
- ▷ Development of preliminary recommendations
- ▷ Findings and recommendations are compiled by the coordinator; draft report created
- ▷ Draft findings sent to superintendent to check for factual accuracy

4. Prioritization Session

3-4 weeks after the district review the Center for District and School Accountability may engage the superintendent and a cross-district team to identify which findings of the review report are of highest priority for action. In the prioritization session the prioritization team will use the report to make well-informed decisions about next steps. Engaging a cross-district team for the process provides districts with an opportunity for developing strategy that interconnects their work. This process can help leaders to identify overlapping needs, duplications of effort, and/or conflicting priorities in a way that should result in recalibrating plans and creating new systemic efficiencies. The agenda is as follows.

Agenda for Prioritization Sessions

a. Introductions, Purpose, Intended Outcomes.
b. Findings are sorted: District leaders participate in activity to sort the draft findings into two categories: Agree (I agree with this finding) and Question (I question this finding because ____)
c. “Question” Findings are discussed: clarifications are made within the group, remaining questions are identified, and the maximum agreement possible is reached. Some “Question” findings may become “Agree” findings.
d. Findings are prioritized: District leaders participate in activity to complete a chart that lists the “Agree” findings, identifies strategies/resources, and identifies possible next steps. The team then determines the level of effort to address the issue (high/low) and the level of impact if successful (high/low).
e. Immediate next steps are identified: the prioritization team identifies the 3 next steps; the CDSA considers this information when reviewing the review team’s draft recommendations.

5. Publication of the Final Report

- Specific recommendations are confirmed by ESE for inclusion in final report
- Final reports include a description of the district context and background, demographic and student achievement data, findings focused on the school system’s most significant strengths and challenges, and recommendations that the district can use for ongoing systematic improvement and that ESE can use to consider giving the district priority for technical assistance and other resources.
- Report posted to http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/

D. What’s Next?

After the review, district leaders should have a clearer sense of which practices are contributing to success and which might need to be further developed. The following other steps may be taken if helpful to communicate the district’s needs and promote improvement:

- The Regional System of Support may provide targeted assistance
- CDSA may report out to the School Committee
- In the case of priority districts, the report may be the basis for future technical assistance, ESE intervention, or dissemination of practices.

The Review Process

Preparation for the review:
CDSA will assemble a review team made up of 4-6 independent consultants. Each consultant will have expertise in one of the six district standards. Before the site visit, the district will send documents requested to CDSA. The team will review these documents and other relevant information on the district provided by ESE. This will help them prepare thoughtful questions for interviews and focus groups. The team will meet at ESE for two days before the site visit to review documents on the district, sort evidence, and develop questions to various stakeholders in the district. Arrangements will be made to interview the district's turnaround partners and monitors, including ESE staff and contracted vendors, as necessary.

The Department and review team coordinator will work collaboratively with the district to establish a specific schedule for the site visit that meets the needs of the district and its schools, to the extent possible. What works for one district may not work for another. The district liaison will work to establish an appropriate schedule for school visits and set up focus groups that are appropriately composed. The liaison should work with principals to schedule times for principal interviews and teacher team meetings. The school may propose a classroom observation schedule; in any case, most observations will be random. The district liaison should not share the schedule with other district personnel until the review team coordinator informs the liaison that the schedule is final: schedules undergo numerous changes in the course of preparing for a review.

The site visit will begin with an introductory meeting with key district leaders. This informal meeting will give the review team a chance to introduce themselves and begin the ongoing communication with the district that will characterize the review's joint process. If district leadership have any particular questions about how district systems are working, this is their opportunity to bring them to the attention of the review team.

During the site visit the team will review documents and files and conduct a series of interviews and focus groups to gather information. The various interviews and focus groups are listed on the Draft Site Visit Schedule, below; questions are based on indicators under each standard (see Appendix J). The purpose of interviews and focus groups at schools is to understand the impact of district systems and practices on staff, students, and parents. The district may present the team with additional information at any point during the site visit. As it progresses, the review team may request additional documents as well as follow-up interviews to address questions that emerge after focus groups, classroom observations, etc. This will be the team's opportunity to make sure that the evidence it gathers is complete. In addition, The site visit will culminate with a final meeting with district leaders that will provide the district with an overview of the team's evidence and emerging themes—not findings—from the visit.

After the site visit:
- The team will develop and refine its findings.
- The draft report will be sent to the superintendent for factual correction.
- A survey link will be sent to the district to obtain feedback from district staff on the review.
- The final report reflecting the superintendent's factual correction and including recommendations will be posted to the ESE website at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/.

2011-2012 CDSA Draft Site Visit Schedule

(A more detailed version for the district to use to fill in locations, names, and titles of interviewees, etc. will be placed in the district's dropbox.)

Notes: 1. Arrangements will be made on site to "test" payroll and purchasing. 2. Team members may use laptops to take notes during interviews, focus groups, etc. 3. With the exception of meetings with leadership teams, supervising staff should not be scheduled in focus groups with those under their supervision.

Day 1—Monday, Month & Date

Location 1:	**Team workroom**	**Location 2:**	**Meeting room at central office (for 6-8)**	**Location 3:**	**Another meeting room at central office**
Time	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***
7:30-8:30	**DSA Team Meeting**				
8:30-9:15	**Orientation with District Leaders and Principals**				
9:30-11:00	**Review of Documents**	9:30-11:00	**Leadership & Governance Interview**	9:30-11:00	**Curriculum & Instruction Interview**
11:00-11:30	**Review Team Meeting**				
11:30-12:15	**Lunch meeting**				
12:15-1:45	**Review of Documents**	12:15-1:45	**Leadership & Governance Interview**	12:15-1:45	**HR & PD Interview**
1:45-2:15	**Review Team Meeting**				
2:15-3:30	**Review of Documents**	2:15-3:30	**Student Support Interview**	2:15-3:30	**Teachers Association Interview**
3:00-3:30	**Review Team Meeting**				
3:30-4:30	**Review of Documents**				

Draft Site Visit Schedule
Day 2—Tuesday, Month & Date

Location 1:	**Team workroom/ selected classrooms**	**Location 2:**	**Meeting room at central office (for 6-8)**	**Location 3:**	**Another meeting room at central office**
Time	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***
8:00-8:30	**Review Team Meeting**				
8:30-10:00	**Classroom visits**	8:30-10:00	**Financial & Asset Management Interview (<u>District personnel</u>)**	8:30-10:00	**Leadership & Governance Interview**
10:00-11:30	**Classroom visits**	10:15-11:30	**Curriculum & Instruction Interview**	10:15-11:30	**Student Support Interview**
11:30-12:00	**Lunch Meeting**				
12:00-1:00	**Review Team Meeting**				
1:00-2:30	**Classroom visits**	1:00-2:30	**HR & PD Interview**	1:00-2:30	**Financial & Asset Management Interview (<u>District personnel</u>)**
2:30-3:30 (flex time to meet district needs)	**Teacher Focus Group (High School)**	2:30-4:00 (flex time to meet district needs)	**Teacher Focus Group (Middle School)**	2:30-4:00 (flex time to meet district needs)	**Teacher Focus Group (Elementary)**
3:30-4:30 (flex time to meet district needs)	**School Council Parent Members Focus Group**	4:00-5:00	**Teachers Association Interview**		

Draft Site Visit Schedule
Day 3—Wednesday, Month & Date

Location 1:	**Team workroom/school offices/ selected classrooms/ location for focus group**	**Location 2:**	**Meeting room at central office (for 6-8)/ selected classrooms**	**Location 3:**	**Another meeting room at central office/ location for focus group**
Time	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***	***Time***	***Activity***
8:00-8:30	**Review Team Meeting**				
8:30-10:00	**Interviews of School Leaders/Classroom visits**	8:30-10:00	**Leadership & Governance**	8:30-10:00	**Student Support Interview**
10:00-10:30	**Travel Time**				
10:30-12:00	**Classroom visits**	10:30-12:00	**Classroom visits**	10:30-12:00	**Financial & Asset Management Interview (Town or City personnel)**
12:00-12:30	**Lunch Meeting**				
12:30-2:00	**Classroom visits**	12:30-2:00	**Curriculum & Instruction Interview**	12:30-2:00	**Assessment Interview**
2:00-4:30	**Review Team Meeting**				
4:30 -5:30 (flex time to meet district needs)	**School Committee Interview** (Members will be interviewed in subquorum groups.)	4:30 -5:30 (flex time to meet district needs)	**School Committee Interview** (Members will be interviewed in subquorum groups.)	4:30 -5:30 (flex time to meet district needs)	**School Committee Interview** (Members will be interviewed in subquorum groups.)

Draft Site Visit Schedule
Day 4—Thursday, Month & Date

Location 1:	Team workroom/school offices/selected classrooms/ location for focus group	Location 2:	Selected classrooms	Location 3:	Meeting room at central office/ selected classrooms
Time	*Activity*	*Time*	*Activity*	*Time*	*Activity*
8:00-10:00	**Interviews of School Leaders/ Classroom visits**	8:00-10:00	**Classroom visits**	8:00-10:00	**Classroom visits**
10:00-11:30	**Classroom visits**	10:00-11:30	**Classroom visits**	10:00-11:30	**Classroom visits or Follow-up Interviews**
11:30-12:00	**Lunch Meeting**				
12:00-2:00	**Review Team Meeting**				
2:00-3:00	**Final Review of Documents**			2:00-3:00	**Superintendent Briefing**
3:00-3:30	**Emerging Themes Meeting with District Leaders and Principals**				
3:30-4:00	**Review Team Meeting**				

Review Team Activities during District and School Visits:

Activities	Description
Orientation meeting	The review team will have a chance to introduce themselves and begin the ongoing communication with the district that will characterize the review's joint process.
Document review	The team will review materials that the district provides on site, including a) teacher personnel files randomly selected by the team; b) all administrator evaluations and certifications; c) access to K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents; d) policy manual; and e) other documents requested by the team. The review team will review teacher personnel files and administrator evaluations for the purpose of assessing Human Resources and Professional Development Indicator 2, Supervision and Evaluation.
Interviews with district leaders	Superintendent, assistant superintendent(s), curriculum supervisors at the district and department levels, chief financial officer, controller or purchasing director, HR director, special education director.
School committee interview	All committee members should be invited. The review team will try to accommodate the schedule for the committee members who attend. Committee members will be interviewed in subquorum groups.
Interview with municipal leaders	The mayor(s) or town manager(s) of the school district community or communities. Members of the finance committee(s) may also be invited.
Interviews with teacher union leadership	The president should be invited. The president may delegate this responsibility and may choose to include others.
Interviews with school leaders	School leaders include the principal and may also include key assistants (e.g., assistant principals, curriculum director, and/or lead teachers).
Teacher focus group	Groups of teachers, typically representing all grade levels, make up focus groups. All teachers should be invited. The focus group(s) will be scheduled so that invited teachers may attend after school hours.
Parent focus group	Parents from the school council(s) may be invited.
Classroom visits	Classroom visits will be conducted throughout the school visit. Classroom visits are designed to understand instructional practices and improvement efforts across the school; they are not evaluations of individual teachers. More information is provided in Appendix G.
Teacher team meetings	The team may observe regularly scheduled teacher team meetings. Team members will ask questions only if invited to do so.
Emerging themes meeting	The review team coordinator will share with the district what the team has learned on site and what the team is still sorting out.

Evidence collection:
Using a researcher's perspective, the team will gather evidence from multiple sources among the data, documents, interviews, focus groups, observed teacher team meetings, and classroom visits. The evidence should be triangulated: it should come from more than one source. This ensures that the finding is based on sufficient evidence. It is important for team members to suspend their judgment about the district and its schools until after the evidence is triangulated. Notes of interviews, classroom observations, etc., should be objective; subjective notes are not useful. The team will look at the evidence collectively, as each team member has focused on a particular set of indicators within the set of standards. It is important for the team to check for mutual understanding by summarizing, restating, and asking follow-up questions, especially when evidence appears contradictory. The researcher is curious, not skeptical. The researcher endeavors to ensure accuracy and mutual understanding, not to discover a "gotcha." The evidence that the researcher has gathered may or may not contradict district perceptions of district conditions. In the event that such a contradiction presents itself, the review team member has the responsibility to share the evidence collected by the review team and ask the district for its interpretation. The team will endeavor to develop a shared understanding of diverging interpretations. If unable to do so, the team will at least be transparent in acknowledging the difference between district and team perspectives (on site as well as in relevant findings).

Analysis of evidence:
The team collectively analyzes the data gathered by each team member and makes connections among evidence gathered for each standard. The team considers the body of evidence in analyzing what impact the district's systems have on student achievement.

Emerging themes:
From this analysis, the team develops emerging themes to share with the district at the end of Day 4. The team should be sure to remind the district that the themes are *not* equivalent to "findings." The team has not yet had sufficient time to sort through all the evidence for each standard and consider the full analyses from each team member in order to determine the final set of findings that will appear in the written report. However, in order to ensure transparency, in the emerging themes meeting at the end of the site visit the review team coordinator will share with the district what the team has learned on site and what the team is still sorting out.

Writing the Report

Process for the report:

- At the end of the site visit, the review team shares emerging themes with the district; it uses these themes as a basis for preliminary findings.
- After the site visit review team members complete the analysis of information collected during the review and develop preliminary findings.
- Using the report template and report template guidance, each review team member takes responsibility for drafting the full text of a set of preliminary findings, based on all notes taken and evidence collected by the entire team during the site visit.
- Each team member brings hard copies of the full text of this set of preliminary findings and the evidence relied on to the written findings review meeting following the onsite review; before doing so, they should post their drafts, labeled with version and date, in the CDSA dropbox. Each finding is refined with team feedback and with reference to the evidence to ensure accuracy, consensus, and fulfillment of the requirements for findings stated in the next section. Using the requirements for recommendations two sections below, the team considers each finding to determine whether to make a recommendation based on it and develops recommendations based on the findings.
- Team members revise the drafts as agreed at the written findings review meeting, adding the recommendations. They ensure that the revised findings are backed by evidence. They then post the revised findings and the recommendations in the CDSA dropbox by the time requested.
- The team reviews the drafts of the recommendations, and if necessary the revised findings, at its recommendations meeting.
- The review team coordinator compiles members' drafts into one document before putting it, properly labeled, in the CDSA dropbox by the due date. In compiling the drafts into one document, the review team coordinator makes sure that findings and recommendations written by different members of the team are not unduly repetitive (some overlap is acceptable). Usually findings and recommendations will be 20-30 pages. The review team coordinator makes sure that each team member's evidence is documented in the dropbox and provides CDSA with complete copies of the district documents reviewed by the team, the interview notes, and the observational evidence.
- The Department reviews the draft—drafts that do not meet requirements will be returned to the review team coordinator or review team member for revision—and clarifies any questions with the review team coordinator. The Department makes sure that the report does not refer to district staff other than the superintendent in a way that would identify them (for example, by giving their title), unless, in the case of administrators, their cited statements are straightforward statements of procedures, responsibilities, etc. or other neutral or positive comments. The Department then sends the draft, without the recommendations, to the district to review for factual errors. Team members should be available after the district's review in case there are any questions about their parts of the report. Department and district staff may then arrange and conduct a prioritization session (see section entitled "The District Review" above).

- The Department finalizes the report, including the recommendations, sends it to the appropriate personnel in the district and to the appropriate District and School Assistance Center, and posts it on its website at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/.

Expectations for the Team and District

The review places a value on engaging the district in understanding its own systems and practices. The process is evidence-based and designed to promote learning and improvement. Clear communication among the district, its schools, and the review team is essential to the process. All review team members have extensive experience in the area they are reviewing, are governed by a Code of Conduct (see Appendix F), are objective, and minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

Expectations for the review team coordinator:

- Exhibit the highest professional standards and be responsible for ensuring that the team does so, as well. If there is a breach or perceived breach of the protocol, inform CDSA immediately.
- As the review begins, make sure that all review team members are scheduled for the interviews they need.
- Maintain and post daily team meeting notes.
- Conduct a daily review of the schedule with the team and ensure that all interviews, focus groups and classroom visits are attended and go smoothly.
- Maintain good channels of communication with the district and schools at all times.
- On the first day of the site visit, provide the district with a randomly selected list of teachers whose personnel files the district is to provide, along with administrator files, for the purposes described in Appendix I.
- Take responsibility for facilitating all team meetings on site.
- Schedule school and classroom visits on site.
- Take responsibility for organizing the team and keeping copies of team notes.
- Keep district and school leaders informed of the team's progress and developing themes throughout the visit.
- Take appropriate actions to follow up on any questions by the team.
- Present the team's emerging themes to district leadership at the end of the visit.
- Write a section of the review report and oversee the writing of the entire report.
- Make sure that each team member's evidence is documented in the dropbox and provide ESE with complete copies of the district documents reviewed by the team, the interview notes, and the observational evidence.

Expectations for review team members:

- Before the site visit, read district and school documents and participate in document review and question preparation; visit the website for the district and the schools being visited, as well as parts of the ESE website, a list of which will be provided.
- During the document review, fill out electronic document/data sheets; after the document review, place these in the CDSA dropbox.

- Arrive punctually for all team meetings and appointments in the district. See outline of review team activities below.
- Participate fully and collegially on teams, take direction from the review team coordinator, and make requests to the district, e.g. for further documentation, through the review team coordinator.
- Organize notes and additional evidence to share with other team members by the end of each site visit day; make sure the coordinator has all notes and other evidence by the end of the site visit.
- Complete assigned section of report according to report template guidance, making sure that it is backed by evidence.
- Participate in refining the draft of the report, ensuring that it contains sufficient evidence, is accurate, and reflects the consensus of the team.
- While revising the draft and adding the recommendations, make sure that statements are backed by evidence.
- Abide by the Code of Conduct for Reviewers in Appendix F.
- Abide by the Guidelines for Classroom Visits (see Appendix G).
- Adhere to deadlines.

Outline of Review Team Activities:
- Document review and question development meeting (two days)
- Site days in district (four days)
- Findings development team meeting (one day)
- Written findings review team meeting (one day)

Expectations for the district:
- Explain the purpose and process of the review to all staff.
- Before the site visit, send the documents requested and work with the coordinator to finalize the schedule.
- Provide confidential team meeting space with Internet access and access to a copier during each day on site.
- Provide a space for each interview (not the team room).
- Welcome the review team and recognize that its efforts are on behalf of its students.
- Work with the review team to ensure that the visit runs smoothly.
- Engage faculty and other stakeholders to reflect on district systems and practices and their impact.
- Provide the review team coordinator with any additional documents requested, including personnel files.
- Maintain good communication with the review team coordinator throughout the review, conveying any concerns or other feedback from staff.
- Respond frankly to the review team’s developing themes and provide additional evidence when necessary.
- Consider participation with Department staff in a prioritization session (see “The District Review” above).

- After the site visit, invite all participants in the review to complete a brief online survey (to be supplied) to give the Department feedback on the review process.

Appendix A: Checklist of Data/Documents Provided by ESE

(including information previously submitted to ESE by the district)

Documents to be provided by ESE to the review team before the site visit	
1. District Profile Data (to be used by the review team if there is a discrepancy with DART or EDW data)	
2. District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)	
3. Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)	
4. Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report (even if not published within the last two years) and the follow-up Mid-cycle Report if one has been published since the latest CPR Report	
5. Most recent NEASC report	
6. Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years	
7. Collective Bargaining Agreement for Teachers, including the Teacher Evaluation Tool	
8. Staff Report (Highly Qualified)	
9. Long Term Enrollment Trends	
10. End-of-Year Report	
11. List of Federal and State Grants	
12. Municipal Profile	

Appendix B: District Task Checklist

(to be used by the district to prepare for the review)

PLEASE NOTE:

- *Electronic documents are preferred if available. If documents are on the district website, please provide URL. If not, please send on a CD or flash drive or download to Security Portal.*
- *Please indicate if any of these documents are unavailable.*
- *Other pertinent information about the district that might inform the review team is welcome.*

Documents and data to be provided by the district before the site visit
1. Organization chart
2. District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans
3. School committee minutes for past year
4. Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget.
5. Curriculum guide overview
6. High school program of studies
7. Matrix of assessments (Appendix C)
8. Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
9. Descriptions of student support programs
10. Program evaluations
11. Student and Family Handbooks
12. Faculty Handbook
13. Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses if available
14. Teacher certification and qualification attachment (Appendix D)
15. Teacher planning time schedules
16. Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals.
17. Classroom observation tools not used in the teacher evaluation process
18. Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
19. Numbered list of teachers
20. Teacher attendance data (Appendix E)
To be arranged by the district before the site visit
1. Administrators, faculty, and staff made aware of the visit, its purpose, and the review schedule
2. Private meeting space for review team secured for days in the district office
3. Access to copier, printer, and internet
4. Private meeting space secured for district level interviews (different from team room)
5. Lunch arrangements for the review team made (the team can reimburse)
6. District prepared to provide a) teacher personnel files randomly selected by the team; b) all administrator evaluations and certifications; c) access to K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents; d) policy manual; and e) other documents requested by the team.
7. School schedules, directions to schools, maps, and parking arrangements
After the site visit: A survey link will be sent to the district to seek feedback on the review.

Appendix C: Assessment Matrix

Please note that special education and ELL assessments need not be included.

A Subject	B Assessment	C School(s) Where Used	D Grades Used	E Number of Times Given Per Year

SAT I Data (for previous school year):	Number and percentage of **juniors** who took the SAT I at least once: Number (%)	Number and percentage of **seniors** who took the SAT I at least once: Number (%)	Average SAT I scores for **juniors**: Reading: Math: Writing:	Average SAT I scores for **seniors**: Reading: Math: Writing:

Appendix D: Teacher Certification and Training

A School Name	B Total Number of Teachers (FTEs)	C Total # of Teachers with Special Education Certification (FTEs)	D # of Teachers with Dual Certification Including Special Education Certification (FTEs)	E Total # of Teachers with ESL Certification (FTEs)	F # of Teachers with Dual Certification Including ESL Certification (FTEs)	G SEI Endorsment
DISTRICT TOTAL						

Appendix E: Report of Instructional Staff Attendance

Directions: Please complete the report for all teachers in the previous school year. CDSA assumes a 180-day work year for teachers; if this is not the case, please indicate that on the line above the chart below. Please count each teacher, not FTEs, in column B. For columns C, D, E, F, G, and H, indicate partial days actually absent in terms of decimals (one-half day = 0.5 days, e.g.). Long-term illness (column C) is absence for 10 or more consecutive workdays and includes use of sick leave for catastrophic illness and maternity leave, as well as Worker's Compensation. Short-term illness (column D) is absence for less than 10 consecutive workdays and may also include use of sick leave for family illness. Column E includes days absent from teaching duties, whether paid or unpaid, approved or unapproved, due to attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops, to serve on professional committees, and for sabbatical. Please include bereavement, parental, adoptive, and extended maternity leaves, as well as leaves for religious reasons in column H. Please indicate if the data is not applicable (na), unattainable (un), or irretrievable (ir) in the appropriate cell below. All cells should be filled.

Days in School Year (if other than 180)________________

A School Name	B Number of Teachers	C Days Absent for Long-Term Illness	D Days Absent for Short-term Illness Days	E Days Absent for Professional Development	F Days Absent for Jury Duty or Military Service	G Personal Days	H Days Absent for Other Reasons

Prepared by________________________ ____________________________________ Date___________
(print name) (signature)

Appendix F: Code of Conduct for Reviewers

1. **Carry out work with integrity**.
    a. Treat all those you meet with courtesy and sensitivity. Try to minimize stress.
    b. Allay anxiety through mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said.
    c. Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well students are learning.
    d. Protect sensitive and confidential information.

2. **Act in the best interests of students and staff.**
    a. Emphasize that students come first and are at the center of the review.
    b. As much as possible, minimize disruption to teaching and learning.
    c. Do not criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school.
    d. Classroom visits are used only to understand instruction at the school. Classroom visits are not evaluations. Specific feedback and information about individual teachers will not be shared with any school personnel.
    e. All teacher interviews are anonymous. Only the superintendent will be identified by name; other individuals will be identified by position only, where appropriate, in both oral and written reports.
    f. Try to understand what leaders and teachers are doing and why.

3. **Base findings on evidence.**
    a. Findings must be robust, fully supported by evidence, and defensible.
    b. Findings must be reliable in that others would make the same finding from the same evidence.
    c. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on evidence. This applies, as well, to review team members' findings.
    d. Discussion with staff and review team members is part of the process to create a validated and reliable evidence base from which findings are made.

Appendix G: Guidelines for Classroom Visits

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Classroom visits are one source of information for the review team on instruction in the district. The team will visit a representative range of grade levels, focusing on core academic areas, especially ELA, mathematics, and science. It is expected that classrooms will be visited for no less than 20 minutes to allow the team to derive an understanding of the lesson and the classroom climate. Visits may be scheduled or spontaneous.

Classroom visits should reflect a typical experience for students and teachers. Teachers do not need to address the classroom visitor or provide an explanation of the lesson. The classroom visitor may walk around the classroom to review student work or classroom postings, if appropriate.

Classroom visits are NOT evaluations of individual teachers. Specific information about individual teachers will not be shared with any school personnel. Review team members will not provide feedback to individual teachers.

Guidelines for the review team for classroom visits:

- Record factual data on the Instructional Inventory Record (Appendix H) using quotes, tallies, or descriptions.
- Label Instructional Inventory with descriptive characteristics, not identifiers such as teacher names.
- Avoid distractions to the class.
- Review samples of student work in folders, portfolios, or displays. Include specific examples when completing the Inventory.
- Talk to students (if appropriate): *What are you learning? Why are you learning it? How do you know if your work is good? What do you do if you need help?*
- Talk to teachers (if appropriate): *What did you hope your students would learn? Why? What do you look for to know if your students met lesson objectives?*
- Make sure that each class visit is for about the same amount of time.

Guidelines for discussion during team meetings (all to occur in the team meeting room):

- All team members share evidence related to each characteristic.
- They state factual evidence and do not make judgmental or subjective statements.
- The team shares and tallies the evidence (No Evidence, Partial Evidence, Clear and Consistent Evidence) for all classes/characteristics using the Instructional Inventory Spreadsheet.
- The team shares highlights (big ideas, trends, areas of strong practice, areas of need) from the aggregated evidence they collected.
- The team discusses overarching trends, strengths, and challenges observed.
- The team reaches consensus on the trends across classroom visits.
- No data identifying individual classes is distributed to teachers.
- A team member enters data into the Instructional Inventory Spreadsheet and shares it with the team.

Appendix H: Instructional Inventory

Date: ___________District:_______________________School:____________________________ Observer:_______________
Subject: _______________Grade Level: _______ Time in: ______ Total time: ________ Part of Lesson: Beginning Middle End
Students _________ #Teachers ____________ #Assistants______ Circle: ELL SPED RTI Other ______________________

0=No Evidence 1=Partial Evidence (with comments) 2=Clear and Consistent Evidence

O	*1*	*2*	*Inventory Item*	*Evidence*
			Learning Environment	
			1. Interactions between teacher and students and among students are positive and respectful.	
			2. Behavioral standards are clearly communicated and disruptions, if present, are managed effectively and equitably.	
			3. Classroom procedures are established and maintained to create a safe physical environment and promote smooth transitions among all classroom activities.	
			4. Lesson reflects rigor and high expectations.	
			5. Classroom rituals, routines and appropriate interactions create a safe intellectual environment in which students take academic risks and most behaviors that interfere with learning are prevented.	
			6. Multiple resources are available to meet students' diverse learning needs.	
			7. The physical arrangement of the classroom ensures a positive learning environment and provides all students with access to learning activities.	
			Teaching	
			8. Demonstrates knowledge of subject and content.	
			9. Communicates clear grade-appropriate learning objectives aligned to state standards. Applicable ELL language objectives are evident.	
			10. Uses appropriate and varied strategies matched to learning objectives and content.	

O	*1*	*2*	*Inventory Item*	*Evidence*
			11. Requires inquiry, exploration, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of concepts individually, in pairs or in groups to demonstrate higher-order thinking. (circle observed skills)	
			12. Uses varied questioning techniques that require/seek thoughtful responses and promote deeper understanding	
			13. Implements appropriate and varied strategies that meet students' diverse learning needs.	
			14. Paces lesson to engage all students and promote understanding.	
			15. Conducts frequent formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction.	
			16. Makes use of technology to enhance learning.	
			Learning	
			17. Students are engaged in productive learning routines.	
			18. Students are engaged in challenging academic tasks.	
			19. Students assume responsibility for their own learning.	
			20. Students articulate their thinking or reasoning verbally or in writing either individually, in pairs or in groups.	
			21**.** Students' responses to questions elaborate about content and ideas. (not expected for all responses)	
			22. Students make connections to prior knowledge, real world experiences and other subject matter.	
			23. Students use technology as a tool for learning and/or understanding.	
			24. Student work demonstrates high quality and can serve as exemplars.	

Appendix I: Review of District Personnel Files

Pre-Transition Evaluation Systems

The purpose of the review of district personnel files is to verify that the district is using appropriately licensed teachers, highly qualified according to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, who are adequately supervised and evaluated and actively engaged in well-selected professional development activities. There are several steps involved in conducting this review with adequate attention to the security of personal information.

Selection of a statistically representative sample

The district will be asked to provide the review team with a numbered list of faculty members. Review team coordinators will determine the number of folders to review using the formula

Files =20+ (√number of teachers). The coordinator will then use the web site www.random.org to generate a list of random numbers that will be used to choose the personnel files from the numbered list provided by the district.

Review of the Files

Administrator files: Review of principal and other administrator personnel files will focus on licensure or waiver status as described in state regulations, the presence of annual personnel evaluations, any communications from the superintendent, whether positive or negative, and the characteristics of evaluations, including whether they are aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and are informative, instructive, and conducive to professional development. Notes on the review of administrator files will be kept on an "Administrator Evaluation Spreadsheet" that has been placed for the district's information and the team's use in the district's dropbox.

Teacher files: Review of teacher files will focus on licensure or waiver status, the presence or absence of evaluations, and the characteristics of the evaluations, including whether they are aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching and are informative, instructive, and conducive to professional development. Teachers who have not attained professional teacher status should be evaluated annually according to regulations. Teachers who have attained professional teacher status may be evaluated during alternate years. Those who review personnel files will use a "Teacher Evaluation Spreadsheet" to record the characteristics of the evaluations. This spreadsheet has been placed for the district's information and the team's use in the district's dropbox.

Districts are not required to maintain teacher professional development plans in personnel folders. There may be a reference to such documents, or not. If referenced the reference should be noted, but the lack of such references should not be interpreted negatively. Similarly, teacher files containing improvement plans or disciplinary actions should also be noted.

It is important to stress that medical files belonging to any staff members are private and should not be reviewed by team members. They should be kept in a separate file from evaluation and licensure documents, but if not, they should be ignored by review team members. It is also important to recognize that professional development files contain sensitive information, and districts are required to maintain them securely. Teams are expected to ensure that district expectations regarding the security of all personnel files are respected; they will undergo training before the site visit on keeping them secure.

Post-Transition Systems

When reviews are conducted in districts that have begun evaluating staff under systems aligned with the educator evaluation regulations, 603 CMR 35.00, as amended by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on June 28, 2011, selection of the random sample of teacher evaluations will be conducted as previously described, except that the numbered list of faculty members the district provides will be only those faculty members who have been evaluated under the district's new evaluation system. The team will review only evaluations performed under the new system.

Appendix J: District Standards and Indicators

For the official standards and indicators see http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/general/ or http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/accountability/dr/default.html. The indicators below have been slightly modified to emphasize ESE priority goals.

Leadership and Governance

1. Focused School Committee Governance
2. Effective District and School Leadership
3. District and School Improvement Planning
4. Educationally Sound Budget Development
5. Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum
2. Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction
3. Tiered Instruction and Sufficient Instructional Time

Assessment

1. Data Collection and Dissemination
2. Data-Driven Decision-Making
3. Student Assessment

Human Resources and Professional Development

1. Staff Recruitment, Selection, Assignment
2. Supervision and Evaluation
3. Educator Development

Student Support

1. Academic and Non-Academic Support
2. Access and Equity
3. Educational Continuity and Student Participation
4. Family, Community, and Partner Engagement
5. Safety

Financial and Asset Management

1. Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process
2. Adequate Resources
3. Effective Resource Management and Allocation
4. Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits
5. Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

<u>Leadership and Governance</u>: School committee and district and school leaders establish, implement, and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of policies and procedures that are standards-based, driven by student achievement data, and designed to promote continuous improvement of instructional practice and high achievement for all students. Leadership decisions and actions related to the attainment of district and school goals are routinely communicated to the community and promote the public confidence, community support, and financial commitment needed to achieve high performance by students and staff.

1. **Focused School Committee Governance:** School committee members are informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities under the Education Reform Act. In their policy-making and decision-making they are guided by improvement plan goals and informed by student achievement data and other educationally relevant data. The performance of the superintendent is annually evaluated based on the attainment of district goals , MCAS results, and other student achievement data, in accordance with the new Educator Evaluation regulations and using targets set through both state and district accountability expectations. Together with the superintendent, the school committee creates a culture of collaboration and develops contracts and agreements which encourage all stakeholders to work together to support higher levels of student achievement and meet state expectations by implementing important initiatives such as the new Educator Evaluation model in a timely way.

2. **Effective District and School Leadership**: The superintendent promotes a culture of transparency, accountability, public confidence, collaboration, and joint responsibility for student learning within the district and broader community. The superintendent effectively delegates educational and operational leadership to principals, program leaders, and administrators, and annually evaluates their performance in their roles based on the goals in the district and school improvement plans, MCAS results, and other relevant data. *The district and each school take action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, in part by leveraging resources. Each school leadership team a) ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school's mission and strategies, b) supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, c) uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development, and d) focuses staff time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations and use of data for improvement planning and management (CSE #2).*

3. **District and School Improvement Planning:** The district and school leaders have a well-understood vision or mission, goals, and priorities for action that are outlined in a District Improvement Plan. The plan's performance goals for students and its analysis of student achievement data drive the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs. Each school uses an approved School Improvement Plan that is aligned with the district's plan and based on an analysis of student achievement data. District and school plans are developed and refined through an iterative process that includes input from staff, families, and partners on district goals, initiatives, policies, and programs. District and school leaders periodically report to the school committee, staff, families, and community on the extent of the attainment of the goals in the plans, particularly regarding student achievement.

4. **Educationally Sound Budget Development:** The superintendent annually recommends to the school committee educationally sound budgets based primarily on its improvement planning and analysis of data. The budget is developed and resources are allocated based on the ongoing analysis of aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data to assure the budget's effectiveness in supporting improved achievement for all student populations. District leaders promote equity by distinguishing among the needs of individual schools' populations and allocating adequate resources to the schools and students with greater needs. Each school's administrators are actively involved in the development of its budget.

5. **Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention**: *The district has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways. Using these, it monitors the performance of students and conditions in each school. The district also identifies any persistently low-achieving and/or struggling schools; makes any needed changes in staffing, schedule and/or governance; and supports an ambitious, yet realistic plan for school improvement, including goals, timelines, and benchmarks, with explicit consequences for not meeting benchmarks. The district provides its lowest achieving and struggling schools with additional monitoring and effective support for improvement. (CSE #1)*

<u>Curriculum and Instruction</u>: The curricula and instructional practices in the district are developed and implemented to attain high levels of achievement for all students. They are aligned with components of the state curriculum frameworks and revised to promote higher levels of student achievement.

1. **Aligned, Consistently Delivered, and Continuously Improving Curriculum**: The district and each of its schools have curriculum leadership that ensures consistent use, alignment, and effective delivery of the district's curricula. Teachers and other staff make effective use of aligned, documented, and cohesive curriculum materials for all content areas. These may be in the form of curriculum maps and/or pacing guides and should include curriculum units, high school course syllabi, objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and a balanced set of assessments. The district has established, documented processes for ensuring teachers implement the curriculum, for ensuring that all students have access to their grade-level curricula, and for ensuring the regular and timely review and revision of curricula based on valid research, the analysis of MCAS results and other assessments, and involvement by professional staff, including teachers. *The district ensures that each school's taught curricula a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions, and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course). (CSE #3).*

2. **Strong Instructional Leadership and Effective Instruction:** The district and each of its schools have leadership and support for effective instruction. District and school leaders address instructional needs and strengths that are identified through active monitoring of instruction and ongoing use of formative and summative student assessment data. As a result, the district leadership ensures that the intended curriculum is taught (guaranteed) and learned by its students (viable), with equitable instruction across classrooms (common assignments, assessments, etc.). **Student tasks** are grade appropriate, help students make connections in (culturally) meaningful ways to real world situations, allow students to demonstrate learning in multiple ways, reflect high and rigorous learning expectations, and develop higher-order thinking skills. *The district ensures that instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs. It also ensures that instruction focuses on clear objectives, uses appropriate educational materials, and includes a) a range of strategies, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students' developmental levels and learning needs (as measured by formative assessments); b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning. Each school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice. (CSE #4)*

3. **Tiered Instruction and Sufficient Instructional Time:** The district allocates sufficient instructional time for all students in core content areas. The allocation of time is based on analyses of student achievement data and focused on improving proficiency. *The district has an effective system for identifying all students who are not performing at grade level. Each school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the district ensures that each school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners. (CSE #8)*

<u>Assessment (Effective Use of Data)</u>: District and school leadership have established a culture of making systematic, continuous use of a wide range of information including student assessment results, local benchmarks, and educator and financial data to improve student achievement and inform all aspects of its decision-making including: policy development and implementation, instructional programs, assessment practices, procedures, and supervision.

1. **Data Collection and Dissemination:** Initial data collection procedures and practices ensure accurate and high-quality information for staff. District assessment policies and practices are characterized by the continuous collection and timely dissemination of data. District and school staff members have access to user-friendly, district-wide and school-based reports on student achievement and other relevant data. All appropriate staff and community members are made aware of internal reports and external review findings.

2. **Data-Driven Decision-Making**: The district has established a culture of data-driven decision making focused on results. The district is highly effective at selecting high-leverage data and analyzing it in order to use data to drive decision-making. District and school leadership annually review student assessment results, student growth data, external and internal reviews, and other pertinent data to prioritize goals, maximize effectiveness in allocating human and financial resources, and to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services. District and school leaders monitor student achievement, educator practice, and financial/resource data throughout the year in order to ascertain progress towards goals identified in the district and school plans, and to make needed adjustments to programs, policies, services, or supervision practices. All professional staff members are supported and expected to use aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data regularly to set goals, reflect on them, and make mid-course corrections to improve performance.

3. Student Assessment: *The district ensures that each school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments to guide instruction and determine individual remedial and enrichment requirements. Benchmark assessments are given 4 – 8 times per year. (CSE #5)*

<u>Human Resources and Professional Development</u>: The district identifies, attracts, and recruits effective personnel, and structures its environment to support, develop, improve, promote, and retain qualified and effective professional staff who are successful in advancing achievement for all students.

1. **Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Assignment:** The district has policies, practices, and timelines to secure candidates who are committed and qualified to meet student needs, contribute to a professional learning community, and in the case of teachers, provide high quality instruction in their content area. The district attracts quality candidates by setting high screening standards, by appropriately compensating staff, and by actively seeking a diverse pool of high-quality candidates for hard-to-staff positions, using varied incentives and other strategies. Hiring and placement timelines, policies, and practices allow districts to recruit high-quality candidates in a competitive time frame. Hiring processes include input from appropriate district stakeholders. During the hiring process, the district assesses candidates' proficiency in domains of the common core of professional knowledge and skills. All members of the professional staff have appropriate Massachusetts licensure. In the event of unfilled professional positions, districts pursue waivers and provide mentoring and support to attain the standard of substantial annual progress toward appropriate licensure. When making teacher assignments, the district makes student learning central, considering student outcomes and student needs as measured by student growth and other data, and matching teacher experience, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills to student needs. The district places a high priority on retaining and maximizing the impact of effective professional staff by providing new roles and opportunities for growth and a career ladder. The district provides administrators with guidance and support to make effective decisions regarding the selection and assignment of staff. *The district ensures that each principal has the authority, guidance, and assistance needed to make staffing decisions based on the school's improvement plan and student needs. (CSE#6)*

2. **Supervision and Evaluation:** The district promotes a culture of growth-oriented supervision and evaluation through a combination of formal reviews, ongoing informal instructional feedback, the recognition of excellence, and differentiation by career stage. The district's evaluation procedure for educators' performance meets the requirements of state law and regulation and is informative, instructive, and used to promote individual growth and overall effectiveness. Continued employment for all educators is linked to evidence of effectiveness, as assessed by improvement in student performance and other relevant school data. Through effective supervision practices, administrators identify the strengths and needs of assigned staff in order to plan effective implementation of district and school initiatives, assess the application of skills and practices learned from professional development, provide struggling staff with support and opportunities for additional professional development aligned to their educator plans, and provide frequent, high-quality feedback focused on professional growth. The district ensures that school leaders regularly use evidence-based supervision processes to monitor and support teachers to meet instructional and program expectations based on high standards of performance aligned to the common core of professional knowledge and skills. Student growth is at the center of the district's evaluation procedure for teachers' performance, which is aligned to the supervision process, incorporates multiple sources of data including student growth, is effectively implemented by trained administrators, and fulfills the requirements of state law and regulation. The district has identified variegated strategies for supporting teachers and developing struggling teachers, gives teachers shortened timelines for improvement (less than a school year), and has dismissed or demoted educators who do not meet evaluation criteria over time. The district ensures that educators receive the guidance and support to effectively use the formal evaluation process to advance the fulfillment of high professional expectations for performance.

3. **Educator Development:** District and school organization, culture, and structures create a climate conducive to adult learning through effective communication; adequate ongoing professional improvement aligned to teacher needs and goals and followed up with appropriate coaching or support; and joint responsibility for student learning. Individual educator evaluation and team professional development goals are systematically followed up on. The district maintains a strong commitment to creating and sustaining a professional development program that supports educators at all stages in their careers, including induction. Professional development programs and services are based on district priorities, information about staff needs, student achievement data, and assessments of instructional practices and programs at each school. Programs progress developmentally and differentiate for educators' different areas of responsibility and levels of expertise and experience. The district supports teacher leadership and growth by creating opportunities for exemplary teachers to have responsibility for instructional leadership and mentoring. *Professional development includes a) both job-embedded and individually pursued learning, including content-based learning, that enhances a teacher's knowledge and skills and b) structures for collaboration that enable teachers to have regular, frequent department and/or grade-level common planning and meeting time that is used to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. (CSE #7)*

<u>Student Support</u>: The district creates a climate conducive to learning for all students. The district provides quality programs for all students that are comprehensive, accessible, and rigorous. The district provides student academic and non-academic support services; these services and district discipline and behavior practices address the needs of all students. The district is effective in maintaining high rates of attendance for students and staff and retains the participation of students through graduation.

1. **Academic and Non-Academic Support:** The district has policies, procedures, and practices that create an effective system for monitoring the progress of all students and identifying all students who are not performing at grade level. These policies, procedures, and practices promote a culture of high student achievement, support course completion and grade promotion, encourage on-time graduation, and ensure that students are college- and career-ready. Students with disabilities and ELL students have appropriate supports. *The district ensures that each school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework. Students' needs are met in part through a) the provision of coordinated student support services and universal breakfast (if eligible); b) the implementation of a systems approach to establishing a productive social culture that minimizes problem behavior for all students; and c) the use of consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management techniques that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning. (CSE #9)*

2. **Access and Equity:** The district has systems to ensure all students are able to fully participate in the academic program. District and school staff promote high achievement for all students, allowing equitable participation in advanced and accelerated programs and narrowing proficiency gaps. To that end, the district uses aggregated and disaggregated data on student participation and achievement to adjust policies and practices and to provide additional programs or supports. Inclusive classrooms and programs are designed to ensure access for students with disabilities and English language learners, and students are educated in the least restrictive environment and included in the life of the school. The district and its schools work to promote equity throughout all schools through such means as ensuring linguistically and culturally appropriate practices. Leaders actively create expectations and pathways to ensure that all students are prepared for post-secondary education and career opportunities upon graduation.

3. **Educational Continuity and Student Participation:** Fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices are implemented to promote, monitor, and report student attendance and engagement. The district ensures appropriate provisions are made to ensure continuity for students in part by promoting and tracking staff attendance, participation, and engagement. District and school policies and practices also help all students make effective transitions between schools, grade levels, and programs. Entering and mobile students are promptly placed in educationally appropriate settings using information from skill and other assessments when prior school records are not accessible. Homeless students have timely and equitable access to quality programs supported by district oversight, policies, and practices to address their needs. Fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices are implemented to reduce suspensions, exclusions, and other discipline referrals. Policies and practices are implemented to support credit recovery, reduce the likelihood of students dropping out, and re-engage them if they do, in an educationally appropriate placement. The district is flexible enough to support students in different circumstances through graduation, by such means as exploring nontraditional pathways for college and career readiness.

4. **Family, Community, and Partner Engagement**: *The district ensures that each school develops strong working relationships with families and appropriate community partners and providers in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being (CSE #10);* such community partners and providers as human service agencies, corporate and civic sponsors, and higher education give students and families access to physical, mental, and behavioral health services, social services, and recreational opportunities.

5. Safety: The district supports schools to maintain safe environments for staff and students. The district has a comprehensive safety plan that is reviewed annually with local police and fire departments and is used to create aligned school plans. The district provides ongoing training for appropriate staff in dealing with crises and emergencies, as well as opportunities for all staff and students to practice safety procedures.

<u>Financial and Asset Management</u>: The district budget document is clear, comprehensive, and aligned to district goals including student achievement and educator effectiveness goals. The budget is created through an open, participatory process. The district pursues and secures resources to improve education. The district effectively manages its financial and capital assets and does the appropriate long-term planning.

1. **Comprehensive and Transparent Budget Process:** The district's budget is developed through an open, participatory process, and the resulting document is clear, comprehensive, complete, current, and understandable. The budget document provides accurate information on all fund sources, as well as budgetary history and trends including expenditures by the municipality for educational purposes. The district and community have appropriate written agreements related to 603 CMR 10.0 that detail the manner for determining charge-backs. Regular, timely, accurate, and complete financial reports are made to the school committee, appropriate administrators and staff, and the public. Required local, state, and federal financial reports and statements are accurate and filed on time.

2. **Adequate Resources:** The community annually provides sufficient financial resources to ensure educationally sound programs and quality facilities, with a sufficient district revenue levy and level of local spending for education. The district meets or exceeds the Net School Spending (NSS) requirements of the education reform formula. The district has a system in place to pursue, acquire, monitor, and coordinate all local, state, federal, and private competitive grants. The district implements an effective system to monitor special revenue funds, revolving accounts, and the fees related to them to ensure that they are managed efficiently and used effectively. The district actively seeks resources and expands capacity through collaboration with external partners such as educational collaboratives and institutions of higher education.

3. **Effective Resource Management and Allocation:** The district effectively allocates its resources to directly support district goals in order to promote student achievement. *The district ensures that each principal makes effective and strategic use of district and school resources and has sufficient budget authority to do so. (CSE #11)* As part of its budget development, the district reviews the cost-effectiveness of its programs, initiatives, and activities, based, in part, on student performance data and needs.

4. **Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits:** The district employs qualified administrators who regularly and accurately track spending and other financial transactions. The district consistently implements audit recommendations of independent financial auditing services as required by state law. The district uses forecast mechanisms and control procedures to ensure that spending is within budget limits. It uses efficient accounting technology to facilitate tracking, forecasting, and control procedures, and to integrate the district-level financial information of each school and program. All procurement, tracking, and monitoring systems and external audits are accurate, current, and timely. All assets and expenditures are monitored and tracked to attain the most efficient and effective utilization.

5. **Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance:** The district has a written preventive maintenance program to prolong the effective use of the district's capital and major facility assets. The district ensures that educational and program facilities are clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning. The district has a long-term capital plan that clearly and accurately reflects future capital development and improvement needs, including the need for educational and program facilities of adequate size. The plan is reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.