# Wachusett Regional School District

Comprehensive District Review Report

May 2023

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

75 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02148-4906

781-338-3000

[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

American Institutes for Research

Education Systems and Policy

201 Jones Road, Suite 100  
Waltham, MA 02451

202-403-5000

[www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

dese logo

American Institutes for Research Logo



Contents

[Executive Summary 1](#_Toc118728201)

[Wachusett Regional School District: District Review Overview 6](#_Toc118728202)

[Leadership and Governance 11](#_Leadership_and_Governance_1)

[Curriculum and Instruction 18](#_Toc118728204)

[Assessment 27](#_Toc118728205)

[Human Resources and Professional Development 31](#_Toc118728206)

[Student Support 39](#_Toc118728207)

[Financial and Asset Management 45](#_Toc118728208)

[Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities A-1](#_Toc118728209)

[Appendix B. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report B-1](#_Toc118728210)

[Appendix C. Resources to Support Implementation of DESE’s District Standards and Indicators C-1](#_Toc118728211)

[Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures D-1](#_Toc118728212)

[Appendix E. Student Performance Data E-1](#_Toc118728213)

 

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

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner

Published **October 2023**

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

© 2023 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

This document printed on recycled paper.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

Phone: 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370

[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

## Executive Summary

In accordance with Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct a comprehensive review of Wachusett Regional School District (hereafter, Wachusett) in May 2023. Data collection activities associated with the review focused on understanding how district systems, structures, and practices operate in support of district continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on the six standards (and related indicators) that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness.[[1]](#footnote-2)

### [Leadership and Governance](#_Leadership_and_Governance)

The superintendent of Wachusett, Dr. James Reilly, was appointed in July 2022. He receives support from the deputy superintendent; the director of business and finance; the supervisor of information services; the director of human resources, the administrator of special education, and the director of social-emotional learning, guidance, and equity. These officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Wachusett residents through their oversight of the district. The school committee has 22 members (across five towns and 155 square miles), with each member serving a three-year term.

The school committee has four main responsibilities: (a) developing and evaluating district policy to guide administrative action; (b) approving the district’s budget; (c) hiring, removing, and evaluating the superintendent; and (d) keeping the towns informed about the district and keeping itself informed about the needs and desires of the public. To better respond to district needs, the committee has various subcommittees. The committee presides over meetings with the community and records meeting notes in a publicly accessible place on the district’s website.

At the time of the district review, Wachusett did not have a current district-wide strategic improvement plan and was the district’s three-year-gap-closing Student Opportunity Act Plan to focus improvement efforts. These priorities included improving the district’s MTSS process, providing social-emotional learning supports, and providing high-quality instructional materials. Additionally, in response to overspending and previous deficiency in financial reporting and tracking under prior district leadership, the superintendent and leadership team have made a systemic overhaul of the budget development and financial tracking process.

In terms of strengths, the school committee and educator association are rebuilding trust through the current collective bargaining process. The superintendent also is promoting a culture of communication with district and school personnel and community stakeholders. Although the district does not have a current improvement plan, efforts are guided by their Student Opportunity Act Plan to focus improvement efforts, which emphasizes improving the district’s multitiered system of support (MTSS) process, providing social-emotional learning supports, and providing high-quality instructional materials. Further, each school has a current school improvement plan, and there is consistency in priorities across these plans. To address past budgeting challenges that led to overspending, the district has developed a new, factually based budget development process and made efforts to improve inclusivity and transparency throughout the budgeting process.

At the start of the 2022-23 school year, the district experienced turnover in several district leadership positions. With this new leadership team, developing a district improvement plan to guide efforts moving forward is an area for growth. Additionally, district leaders are working to address challenges in the budget development and financial tracking process, and ensuring budgets are developed with realistic costs to avoid overspending.

### [Curriculum and Instruction](#_Curriculum_and_Instruction)

Wachusett strives to ensure equitable, inclusive, and effective instruction for all students. The district uses a combination of published and district-created curricula, including Fountas & Pinnell, Eureka Math, Reveal Math, Big Ideas, Mystery Science, Inspire Science, History Alive, Actively Learn, and teacher-developed units. Teachers also described using a variety of supplemental curricular materials across schools. The district is actively working toward adopting new curricula that are not only responsive to student needs but also ensure consistency and coherence across different grade levels and schools. To accomplish this, the district has a well-defined process for adopting new curricula, with an adoption team led by teachers, building administrators, and district administrators.

Wachusett offers a comprehensive range of academic and nonacademic offerings and specialized programming that caters to the diverse needs and interests of its students and nurtures the whole child. These opportunities include hands-on learning experiences, academically focused clubs, seminars, advanced courses, and partnership programs. For students who need additional support, district and school leaders have been working to revise and update the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) and standardize MTSS supports.

Five observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Wachusett during the week of May 1, 2023. The observers conducted 121 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused 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,[[2]](#footnote-3) 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). Overall, instructional observations suggest generally strong evidence of emotional support, behavior management, classroom organization, and student engagement. For all three grade bands—K-5, 6-8, and 9-12—average scores in each area rounded to 5.0 or higher, with a maximum possible score of 7.0. Instructional observations suggest generally mixed evidence of rigorous instructional support, with each grade band averaging scores between 3.5 and 4.0.

In terms of strengths, Wachusett has a well-defined process including a team of teachers, building administrators, and district leaders for critically reviewing and selecting new curricular materials. The district uses a variety of instructional approaches and strategies to create an engaging learning environment. To meet the needs of all students, the district has prioritized updating its MTSS documents to support teachers in adjusting their instruction. Schools also provide a variety of academic offerings so that students can explore their interests.

Areas for growth include improving consistency across schools in how much time for common planning time is provided for teachers; developing structures to address students’ social and emotional competencies; embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the curriculum and instruction; and ensuring that all students have equitable access to rigorous learning experiences.

### [Assessment](#_Assessment)

Wachusett uses a range of assessments and data sources to drive effective instruction, including the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), STAR, ACCESS for English learners, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Panorama for SEL, and teacher-developed assessments. Many of these assessments are administered at multiple points throughout the academic year. The district has established some systems and processes for supporting data use, including district-level principal leadership team (PLT) and school-level student support team (SST) meetings.

Wachusett has several strengths in its approach to data and assessment. First, the district’s use of multiple data sources provides an understanding of student performance. Second, there are some formalized structures to support reviewing and discussing student data at both the district (e.g., principal leadership teams) and school levels (e.g., professional learning communities). Third, district leaders have prioritized openly and transparently sharing data with the school committee and broader community. Areas for growth include developing staff comfort with new assessment tools, determining whether the existing tools provide sufficient information on student performance, using a comprehensive data system to provide data on the whole child that all relevant staff can access, and consistently sharing student performance data with students and families.

### [Human Resources and Professional Development](#_Human_Resources_and)

The human resources and professional development infrastructure in Wachusett provides guidance to school leaders on identifying and hiring staff, maintaining staff credentials and certifications, and maintaining employee records and benefits. At the time of the district review, the human resources department was primarily paper driven, and district leaders were working to digitize records within the district, such as employee benefits and time cards, to improve accuracy, give staff members more autonomy, and make record-keeping practices more efficient. The district is planning to add more teachers to its workforce to decrease class sizes and teacher-to-student ratios, although no strategies for teacher diversification have been identified.

Strengths include working to draft and standardize policy and procedure documentation, updating recruitment documentation, including broad representation in the hiring process for administrators, having a professional development committee so that teachers and administrators have a voice in professional development, having a well-defined and comprehensive mentorship program, and having some informal methods to recognize staff.

The district has several areas for growth, including creating a plan for how to digitalize the human resources department to ensure accuracy and timeliness, addressing teacher-to-student ratios in accordance with district policy, identifying and implementing an explicit strategy for teacher diversification, addressing districtwide inconsistencies in the evaluation process, ensuring teacher evaluators include constructive feedback, ensuring administrator evaluations are consistently completed, creating district-wide formal structures to recognize teacher performance, and creating and encouraging opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership activities.

### [Student Support](#_Student_Support)

Wachusett is making a concerted effort to ensure that all schools support students’ safety, well-being, and sense of belonging by identifying and addressing students’ needs and engaging families. Wachusett provides an MTSS to address students’ needs and is updating this documentation to ensure clarity and consistency across the district. Currently, various practices are in place to meet the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students, and each school has an SST to make collaborative decisions about students. The district communicates with families through district- and school-level newsletters.

In terms of strengths, the District Instructional Observation Report and the Views of Climate and Learning survey indicate a strong school culture across the district. To help students feel connected to school, the high school has a variety of clubs and activities for students. To support all students, each school has a well-defined SST process. To ensure that all stakeholders are aware of what is happening across the district, both district and school leaders send regular communications to families. Lastly, to meet the needs of students and families, the district has a variety of community partnerships to provide valuable resources.

In terms of areas of growth, improving the high school’s culture and climate so all students feel safe, supported, and welcomed and improving tolerance and inclusivity across the district are priorities. Additional areas of growth include continuing to clarify guidance on the supports available in each tier across the district, addressing the need for more staff to serve students’ academic and social-emotional needs, and keeping online resources for families up-to-date with relevant information.

### [Financial and Asset Management](#_Financial_and_Asset)

Wachusett is working to update its budget documentation and reporting processes after the district unexpectedly overspent by approximately $400,000 in fiscal year 2022. The district’s fiscal year 2024 Budget Book includes allocating funds for new staffing positions across multiple schools. To fund these needs, the district has requested a larger percentage of discretionary funds from towns than in recent years. Any capital needs greater than $35,000 are covered by the towns, which own the majority of the school buildings; the district manages anything under that amount. District and town leaders work collaboratively with one another, with increased transparency under the new district administration.

Strengths include establishing strong collaboration between district leaders, school administrators, and town officials in developing the fiscal year 2024 budget; presenting data-driven requests to the towns to rebuild trust; increasing transparency about the district’s budget and improved communication between district leaders and town leaders; and prioritizing capital improvement needs across the district.

The district has several areas for growth regarding financial and asset management, including tracking and controlling current year expenditures, ensuring end-of-year reporting is completed on time, completing annual audits, updating cash reconciliation procedures, updating financial records in Munis, updating the Wachusett Capital Expenditure Budget, and identifying a reliable strategy for acquiring money from towns to make repairs and updates to infrastructure.

## Wachusett Regional School District: District Review Overview

### Purpose

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

### Methodology

A district review team consisting of AIR staff members and 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 school committee members, teachers’ association representatives, district and school administrators, teachers, students, and students’ families. Virtual interviews and focus groups also are conducted 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, the team members code and analyze the data to develop a set of objective findings. The team lead and multiple quality assurance reviewers, including DESE staff, then review the initial draft of the report. DESE staff provides recommendations for the district, based on the findings of strengths and areas of growth identified, before AIR finalizes and submits the report to DESE. DESE previews and then sends the report to the district for factual review before publishing it on the DESE website. 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 Wachusett was conducted during the week of May 1, 2023. The site visit included 20 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 110 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students’ families, and teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted five teacher focus groups with approximately 23 elementary school teachers, 11 middle school teachers, and eight high school teachers; two student focus groups with five middle school and five high school students; and three family focus groups with 22 parents.

The site team also conducted 121 observations of classroom instruction in 12 schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

### District Profile

Wachusett’s leader is Dr. James Reilly, who was appointed superintendent in July 2022. The superintendent has support from the deputy superintendent; the director of business and finance; the supervisor of information services; the director of human resources; the administrator of special education; and the director of social-emotional learning, guidance, and equity. The district is governed by a school committee composed of 22 members (across five towns and 155 square miles) who are elected for three-year terms.

In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 482 teachers in the district, with 6,739 students enrolled in the district’s 13 schools. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school.

Table 1. Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | Type | Grades served | Enrollment |
| Early Childhood Center | Early Elementary | PK | 130 |
| Davis Hill Elementary School | Elementary | K-5 | 447 |
| Dawson Elementary School | Elementary | K-5 | 499 |
| Glenwood Elementary School | Elementary | 3-5 | 333 |
| Houghton Elementary School | Elementary | K-4 | 328 |
| Dr. Leroy E. Mayo Elementary School | Elementary | K-5 | 491 |
| Naquag Elementary School | Elementary | K-2 | 363 |
| Thomas Prince School | Elementary/Middle | K-8 | 342 |
| Paxton Center School | Elementary/Middle | K-8 | 454 |
| Chocksett Middle School | Middle | 5-8 | 279 |
| Central Tree Middle School | Middle | 6-8 | 371 |
| Mountview Middle School | Middle | 6-8 | 772 |
| Wachusett Regional High School | High | 9-12 | 1,930 |
| Total |  |  | 6,739 |

*Note.* Enrollment data as of October 1, 2022.

Between 2020 and 2023, overall student enrollment decreased by 271 students, a decrease of approximately 4 percent. Enrollment figures by race/ethnicity and high needs populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and English learners [ELs] and former ELs) compared with the state are in Tables D1 and D2 in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides additional information about district enrollment, attendance, and expenditures.

The total in-district per-pupil expenditure was less than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for K-12 districts of similar size in fiscal year 2021—$14,753 for Wachusett compared with $16,436 for similar districts and less than average state spending per pupil ($18,560). Actual net school spending was greater than what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table D4 in Appendix D.

### Student Performance

In ELA in Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 15 percentage points from 67 percent in 2019 to 52 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 41 percent. In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations decreased by 11 percentage points from 81 percent in 2019 to 70 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 58 percent. (See Tables E1 and E2 in Appendix E.)

* In Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 21 percentage points for African American/Black students; above the state rate by 17 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students and ELs and former ELs; above the state rate by 11 percentage points and 12 percentage points students from low-income families and Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students, respectively; and above the state rate by 1 percentage point to 7 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.
* In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 19 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students; above the state rate by 6 percentage points to 11 percentage points for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students, ELs and former ELs, White students, and students from low-income families; above the state rate by a percentage point for high needs students; equal to the state rate for Asian students; and below the state rate by a percentage point for students with disabilities.

In mathematics in Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 13 percentage points from 64 percent in 2019 to 51 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 39 percent. In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations declined 13 percentage points from 78 percent in 2019 to 65 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 50 percent. (See Tables E3 and E4 in Appendix E.)

* In Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 16 percentage points to 19 percentage points for African American/Black students, ELs and former ELs, and Hispanic/Latino students and above the state rate by 3 percentage points to 11 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.
* In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 21 percentage points to 29 percentage points for ELs and former ELs, Hispanic/Latino students, and Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students; above the state rate by 13 percentage points for students from low-income families; and above the state rate by 1 percentage point to 7 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data, except for students with disabilities, which was equal to the state rate.

In science in Grades 5 and 8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 9 percentage points from 67 percent in 2019 to 58 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 42 percent. In Grade 10, 44 percent of all students scored Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations in 2022, which was below the 2022 state rate of 47 percent. (See Tables E5 and E6 in Appendix E.)

* In Grades 5 and 8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations in science was above the state rate by 23 percentage points to 29 percentage points for African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, and ELs and former ELs and above the state rate by 6 percentage points to 16 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.
* In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations in science was above the state rate by 12 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students; below the state rate by 21 percentage points for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students; and below the state rate by 2 percentage points to 13 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.

The average student growth percentile (SGP) on the 2022 MCAS assessments in Grades 3-8 was 52.3 in ELA and 55.0 in mathematics, which represent typical growth. In Grade 10, SGPs were typical in ELA (42.5) and mathematics (51.0).[[3]](#footnote-4) (See Tables E7-E10 in Appendix E.)

* SGPs in Grades 3-8 in ELA were typical, ranging from 45.6 to 58.2 for each student group with reportable data. Mathematics SGPs were typical, ranging from 48.9 to 58.0 for every student group with reportable data.
* In Grade 10, ELA SGPs were typical for each student group with reportable data, ranging from 40.6 to 47.2. Mathematics SGPs were typical for each student group with reportable data, ranging from 46.1 to 52.8.

Wachusett’s four-year cohort graduation rate for all students decreased 1.6 percentage points from 95.1 percent in 2020 to 93.5 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 90.1 percent. The five-year cohort graduation rate for all students decreased 1.6 percentage points from 96.8 percent in 2019 to 95.2 percent in 2021, which was above the 2021 state rate of 91.8 percent. (See Tables E16 and E17 in Appendix E.)

* The four-year-cohort graduation rate was above the state rate in 2022 by 11.3 percentage points to 13.8 percentage points for African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, and Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students; above the state rate by 2.3 percentage points and 3.8 percentage points for Asian students and students from low-income families, respectively; and below the state rate by 9.6 percentage points for students with disabilities; and below the state rate by 0.2 percentage point and 1.3 percentage points for White students and high needs students, respectively.
* The five-year cohort graduation rate was above the state rate by 16 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students; above the state rate by 0.5 percentage point to 4.2 percentage points for Asian students, White students, high needs students, and students from low-income families; and below the state rate by 2.3 percentage points and 2.4 percentage points for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students and students with disabilities, respectively.

The district’s annual dropout rate increased from 0.5 percent in 2020 to 1.0 percent in 2022, which was below the 2022 state rate of 2.1 percent. (See Table E20 in Appendix E.)

* The dropout rates in Wachusett were below the state rate for every student group with reportable data, except for ELs and students with disabilities, which had higher dropout rates than their statewide peers.

## Leadership and Governance

Dr. James Reilly is the superintendent in Wachusett, assuming his duties as of July 1, 2022. He receives support from the deputy superintendent; the director of business and finance; the director of human resources; the interim administrator of special education; the director of social-emotional learning, and guidance, and equity; the supervisor for information services; an EL education specialist; a literacy specialist; and a facilities manager. These officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Wachusett residents through their oversight of the district. The school committee has 22 members (across five towns and 155 square miles), each serving a three-year term. Across the district, there were several new leaders starting in the 2022-23 school year, including the superintendent, director of business and finance, director of human resources, and four of the 13 school principals.

The school committee partners with district and community leaders to uphold Massachusetts laws and regulations, communicate with multiple education stakeholder groups, and maintain fiduciary responsibilities to Wachusett. The school committee takes the lead on collective bargaining agreements and oversees the district’s budget. The school committee also is responsible for hiring and evaluating the superintendent and met these responsibilities with the current superintendent.

At the time of the district review, Wachusett did not have a current district-wide strategic improvement plan because the previous plan expired in 2021. Currently, district leadership is using the district’s three-year-gap-closing Student Opportunity Act Plan to focus improvement efforts, which emphasizes improving the district’s MTSS process, providing social-emotional learning supports, and providing high-quality instructional materials. The district intends to begin creating a new district improvement plan in fall 2023.

In the past few years, the budget in Wachusett was a challenge, leading to the district unexpectedly overspending by approximately $400,000 in fiscal year 2022. As described by new district leaders, this was due to an improperly developed budget as well as a lack of regular financial tracking. School committee members and town stakeholders were surprised by this discovery, and district leaders have been working closely with the towns to rebuild trust and improve transparency moving forward.

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

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

| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [School committee governance](#_School_Committee_Governance) | * Trust is being rebuilt between the school committee and educator association through the collective bargaining process. |  |
| [District and school leadership](#_District_and_School) | * The superintendent promotes a culture of communication among district personnel, school personnel, and community stakeholders |  |
| [District and school improvement planning](#_District_and_School_1) | * In the absence of a district improvement plan, the district is actively implementing initiatives based on the district’s three-year-gap-closing Student Opportunity Act Plan. * There is alignment across school improvement plans. | * Developing a district improvement plan |
| [Budget development](#_Budget_Development) | * The district has developed a new, factually based budget development process that considers individual building needs and priorities. * District leaders have made efforts to improve inclusivity and transparency in the budget development process. | * Ensuring budgets are developed with realistic costs to avoid overspending |

### School Committee Governance

Wachusett’s school committee has 22 members who represent five towns and 155 square miles, the largest of all school committees in the state. According to the district’s website, the number of school committee members elected varies by town population, with 10 members from Holden, four from Rutland, four from Sterling, two from Paxton, and two from Princeton. Focus group respondents described how, across this large governing body, there are reportedly political divisions, with not all members of the school committee wholly committed to DEI efforts. However, it was generally agreed that members collaborate with one another to improve the district’s schools. According to interviews and focus groups, the school committee has several subcommittees, including the audit advisory board subcommittee, the business and finance subcommittee, the facilities and security subcommittee, and the legal affairs subcommittee. The school committee developed these subcommittees in response to the district’s needs.

The school committee partners with district and community leaders to uphold Massachusetts laws and regulations, communicate with multiple education stakeholder groups, and maintain fiduciary responsibilities to Wachusett. According to the district’s 2024 Budget Book, “the role of the school committee is to hire the superintendent, establish educational goals and policies, and approve an education budget.” During the past year, the school committee focused on hiring a new superintendent, Dr. Reilly, who began in July 2022 and then evaluating him based on DESE’s recommendations for a first-year superintendent. In addition, the school committee has been acclimating to the new central office staff. According to district leaders, “almost 80% of the central office leaders [are new]” this year, having been hired by Dr. Reilly after he started as superintendent (see District and School Leadership). Lastly, school committee members have prioritized raising awareness of budgetary concerns. After Dr. Reilly joined the district, district leaders identified issues with prior years’ financial reporting (see Budget Development). As a result, district and school committee leaders have been focusing on increasing transparency and reporting on the district’s budget to rebuild trust with the towns and schools.

As the employer of record on all collective bargaining agreements, the school committee takes an active and constructive role in developing timely and effective strategies for collective bargaining and managing negotiations. At the time of the district review, the legal affairs subcommittee had been working with the educator association to develop a new collective bargaining agreement with the district. According to the school committee, two members are on the negotiating team, and they then report back to both the superintendent and the full school committee. Teacher leaders generally described the collective bargaining process positively. Educators in focus groups reported feeling “frustrated and ignored in the past,” but they now feel reasonably assured that the current negotiations focus on “bargaining in good faith,” and they feel as though their needs are heard. The rebuilding of trust through the collective bargaining process is an area of strength and is foundational to improving climate across the district.

Overall, the majority of teachers across focus groups reported feeling satisfied with the changes made by the current superintendent in collaboration with the school committee and reported looking forward to the future of the district.

### District and School Leadership

A team of district-level administrators supports the superintendent. This team includes the deputy superintendent; the director of business and finance; the director of human resources; the interim administrator of special education; the director of social-emotional learning, and guidance, and equity; the supervisor for information services; an EL education specialist; a literacy specialist; and a facilities manager. For the 2023-2024 school year, the district allocated funds to hire a newly created curriculum director position, of which one responsibility will be to supervise the EL education specialist and the literacy specialist.

In Wachusett, the district’s central office staff monitor initiatives and carry out different district priorities, such as monitoring special education compliance, maintaining employee records, and monitoring budgetary needs and school spending. These administrators report directly to the superintendent and the school committee. As described in multiple focus groups across stakeholders, significant turnover occurred within the district’s central office staff in the past few years, with interviewees citing about an 80 percent turnover rate. This large turnover rate within the central office includes the addition of a new superintendent and other key district positions, such as the director of business and finance; the director of human resources; the director of social-emotional learning, guidance, and equity; and the interim administrator of special education.

### According to stakeholders across focus groups, the superintendent promotes a culture of communication among district and school personnel and with community stakeholders, which is a strength of the district. He engages with the school committee and the community to support learning and shares information about school needs. Given the district’s immediate needs regarding financial reporting and tracking in the past few fiscal years (see the Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits section), the superintendent reported that his current objectives and focus include information sharing; building trust; and establishing two-way communication, particularly with town leaders, community stakeholders, and building principals.

According to focus groups across nearly all stakeholders, districtwide communication is a priority for district leadership. School committee members reported that the superintendent communicates effectively with the community to maintain and bolster the relationship between the community and the district. In addition, the deputy superintendent meets monthly with the PLT, which includes the principals across all 13 school buildings within the district. Along with the superintendent, other district leaders expressed enthusiasm to move past the district’s problems with financial reporting, tracking, and budgeting and refocus on school needs: they detailed how the new district leadership responded to school leaders and their expressed needs regarding building infrastructure and facilities, as well as the middle and elementary schools’ staffing needs. An example of district leadership being responsive to the needs of the schools is that the 2024 budget increased by $7,122,417 compared to the 2023 budget (a 6.53%) and allocates funding for 11 new school-level positions to the district, including eight elementary teachers, 1 English Learner Education teacher, and two guidance counselors (see Adequate Budget section for more details). These new positions will address class size issues and better meet students’ social emotional and mental health needs. . The school committee and school leaders agreed that Wachusett has been responsive to these types of needs under the new superintendent’s leadership.

### District and School Improvement Planning

District leaders, school leaders, and teachers all agreed that developing a district improvement plan is an area for growth in Wachusett, given the expiration of the old strategic plan for 2016-2021. Based on the prior strategic plan, the district focused on five main elements in recent years:

1. Leadership, governance, and communication;
2. Aligned curriculum;
3. Effective instruction;
4. Professional development and structures for collaboration; and
5. Students’ social, emotional, and health needs.

As described in the previous strategic plan, the plan was developed with input from school staff, parents, and community members through a community survey, which produced more than 2,000 responses; focus groups conducted with community members in all 13 schools and in each town; and the development of a steering committee, composed of a variety of district stakeholders. Based on this past precedent of community involvement, teachers in focus groups reported feeling confident that “all stakeholders will be involved” in creating a new strategic plan for the upcoming school year. According to a district school leader, the district intends to hire an external consultant in fall 2023 to aid with the development of a collective strategic plan and vision. Results of the district review and other data sources will inform the development of this plan.

In lieu of an official district improvement plan, Wachusett district leaders have been referring to the three-year-gap-closing Student Opportunity Act Plan, originally drafted in 2020-2021 and amended in 2022-2023. In this plan, which is publicly available on DESE’s website, the district focused on improving the MTSS system during the 2022-2023 school year. As a district leader described,

Having a consistent approach to supporting students, that’s been one of the things we really tried to concentrate on. That’s where the MTSS work has really come in, to have conversations with our principals and talking about “What do we do?” We have to become aligned.

According to the district’s Student Opportunity Act Fiscal Year 2023 Progress Report and district interviews, a team of district and building administrators is working to revise the DCAP, standardize MTSS supports, and increase staffing, the latter of which is depicted in the fiscal year 2024 budget. As previously described, the district’s 2024 budget allocates funds to add eight teaching positions to address class size issues at the elementary level, two counselors to reduce counselor caseload and encourage students to seek supports, and an English Learner Education teacher to increase support.

According to the Student Opportunity Act Fiscal Year 2023 Progress Report, the district also has prioritized providing students with high-quality instructional materials. This was further supported by focus groups with teachers and district leaders who described that “there’s been a lot of work to adopt high-quality curricular materials for ELA, math, science at the middle school, high school level.” In addition, the district has focused on using the Panorama Student Success Data Dashboard in the 2022-2023 school year, to identify the district’s social-emotional learning needs (see Data and Assessment Systems for more information).

In addition to the Student Opportunity Act Plan, each school has its own school improvement plan, which are up-to-date for the present academic year. Although these school improvement plans were all unique to each school’s specific context and needs, some common themes across school improvement plans emerged, including the following: increasing capacity for schools to manage students’ social-emotional learning needs, improving practices for effective instruction, managing school facilities, and developing schools’ technology resources. The most common theme by far was developing and addressing students’ emotional needs, with all 13 school improvement plans including a goal related to social-emotional learning for the 2022-2023 school year. The alignment of school improvement plans across the district, despite the absence of a current district improvement plan, is a strength of the district.

### Budget Development

District leaders indicated that the budget development process is an area for growth, as a district leader summarized, “The budget process in previous years has been extremely flawed for our school district,” with the district spending more than the amount budgeted. According to interviews, under prior district leaders, the five towns that constitute the district allotted about a 2.5% increase to the previous year’s budget without examining the actual expenditures and student enrollment. This approach proved insufficient for developing a comprehensive budget. Meeting materials to the business and finance subcommittee summarize:

When you look at the FY23 estimated revenue and expenditures, there are a few instances where the District is planning to expend more than the current year’s revenue. This is not an ideal practice and needs to be addressed in the upcoming budget cycle in order to be fiscally responsible.

This process led to significant budget challenges in fiscal year 2022, with the district overspending by approximately $400,000 due primarily to salary appropriations and operations and management appropriations. This came as a surprise across the district, with a school committee member describing the situation as “mind-blowing.” To rectify the budget development process moving forward, the new district leadership has taken several steps. The fiscal year 2024 Budget Presentation details these steps, as follows:

* District leaders have weekly meetings with state officials and the district’s auditors to rectify the overspending that occurred in fiscal year 2022.
* The superintendent led a budget retreat for the school committee to share data, identify district priorities, and gather their input on these priorities for moving forward.
* School and department heads work with district leaders to create documentation of their funding requests.
* District leaders are working to create a more accurate fiscal year 2024 budget based on actual fiscal year 2023 expenditures.
* District leaders meet with town officials to communicate realistic budget capacities.

Overall, there has been a systemic overhaul of the district’s previous budget development process under the new district administration in response to overspending and previous deficiency in financial recording and tracking. The development of a new, factually based, budget development process that considers individual building needs and priorities is a strength of the district. However, ensuring budgets are developed with realistic costs to avoid overspending remains an ongoing area for growth.

Almost all stakeholders reported feeling relieved and satisfied with the current steps that district leaders are taking to remedy issues with budget development, particularly emphasizing their appreciation for financial transparency. District staff, school staff, and community members alike praised the new administrative staff, particularly the superintendent and the director of business and finance who came onto the scene with “no institutional knowledge backing the process [because of staffing turnover]; they were having to learn as they went. And they did a really amazing job.”

School leaders also reported feeling satisfied that their financial needs were being heard under the new district administration. School leaders described how the new superintendent developed a spreadsheet for school leaders with different tabs for each school to document their financial needs. According to the fiscal year 2024 Budget Presentation, district leaders determined essential needs from the spreadsheet of requests that principals and department heads provided, considering data such as the previous year’s spending, student enrollment counts, per pupil expenditure comparisons with other districts within the state, class sizes, staffing ratios, counseling staff caseloads, and EL teacher ratios. This spreadsheet was then presented to the school committee for the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2024 to give school leaders more voice in the budget development process. Even though not all requests from the district’s spreadsheet were met, all requests were presented to the school committee and made publicly available to improve transparency. These efforts to be more inclusive and improve transparency concerning the budgeting process is a strength of the district.

For the budget development process beginning fiscal year 2025, district leaders described plans to get more input from school leaders and department chairs, such as prioritizing specific budget lines, and further soliciting feedback on the budget development process.

### Recommendations

* The district should develop a strategic plan that aligns with its already-existing school improvement plans as well as other plans (e.g. SOA).
* As part of its new budgeting process for fiscal year 2025, the district should closely review departmental budgets for fiscal sustainability.

## Curriculum and Instruction

In accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, Wachusett strives to ensure equitable, inclusive, and effective instruction for all students. To achieve this goal, the district has taken proactive steps to adapt and establish systems and processes that foster collaboration among educators across all content areas, grade levels, and schools. One of the district’s core instructional expectations is that teachers consistently adapt the curriculum to accommodate the unique learning styles, abilities, and interests of their students. This emphasis on curriculum modification ensures that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have access to engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

Recognizing the importance of curriculum alignment, the district is actively working toward adopting new curricula that both responsive to student needs and ensure consistency and coherence across different grade levels and schools. Wachusett offers a comprehensive range of academic and nonacademic offerings that cater to the diverse needs and interests of its students and nurtures the whole child. In addition to its broad range of offerings, Wachusett offers specialized programs designed to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities. These programs are carefully crafted to provide the necessary resources, accommodations, and interventions required for their academic success and overall well-being. However, aggregate instructional observations indicated that instructional expectations and rigorous instruction were not yet implemented consistently across all schools and classrooms.

Table 3 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in curriculum and instruction.

Table 3. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Curriculum and Instruction Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Curriculum selection and use](#_Curriculum_Selection_and) | * The district has a well-defined process and team of teachers, building administrators, and district administrators, for critically reviewing and adopting high-quality curricular materials. | * Improving consistency across schools in how much common planning time is provided for teachers |
| [Classroom instruction](#_Classroom_Instruction) | * The district is implementing diverse instructional approaches and strategies (e.g., standards-based, student-centered, project-based) to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment. * The district has prioritized updating the MTSS documents, including the DCAP, to support teachers in adjusting their instruction to meet student needs. | * Supporting students’ development of social and emotional competencies (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) * Expanding efforts to embed DEI into curriculum and instruction |
| [Student access to coursework](#_Student_Access_to) | * Schools provide a variety of academic offerings that encourage students to pursue different learning experiences and explore their interests. | * Ensuring that all students have equitable access to rigorous learning experiences |

### Curriculum Selection and Use

Curriculum selection and use is an area of focus for the district. A review of Wachusett’s CURATE table[[4]](#footnote-5) indicated that the district uses a combination of teacher-developed and published curricula. At the elementary level, the curriculum consists of the Fountas & Pinnell System (K-5) for ELA, Eureka Math (K-5) for mathematics, and Mystery Science (K-5) and Engineering Is Elementary (Grades 3-5) for science. At the middle school level, the curriculum consists of teacher-developed units (Grades 6‑8) for ELA; Reveal Math (Grades 6-8) for mathematics; Inspire Science, Gizmos, and Project Lead the Way (Grades 6-8) for Science; and History Alive and Actively Learn (Grades 6-8) for social studies. At the high school level, the curriculum consists of Actively Learn and teacher-developed units (Grades 9-12) for ELA, Big Ideas (Grade 9) and teacher-developed units (Grades 10‑12) for mathematics, Gizmos and teacher-developed units (Grades 9-12) for science, and Actively Learn and teacher-developed units (Grades 9-12) for social studies. According to CURATE, Eureka Math and Reveal Math partially meet expectations, with the other curricula are not currently rated by CURATE. For the 2023-2024 school year, the district is adopting Eureka Math Squared (Grades K-5) and Amplify ELA (Grades 6-8) to improve the quality of curricular materials. Overall, Wachusett employs a diverse range of curricula, incorporating both teacher-developed materials and externally purchased resources to meet the educational needs of students across different grade levels and subjects.

Wachusett has a formal curricular review process, including a well-defined process for adopting new curricula. The district has an adoption team consisting of teachers, building administrators, and district administrators. When exploring new curricula, the adoption team uses evaluative measures to ensure the use of high-quality instruction materials. According to a district leader, they use different criteria depending on the curriculum type. For academic materials in ELA, Math, and Science, they develop a vision, parameters, and priorities; conduct research on curriculum standards; evaluate the curriculum using CURATE and EdReports; and gather feedback from staff through surveys. For materials in pother subjects, they compare at least three different programs based on specific criteria. District leaders did not mention or describe how diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations are taken into account when evaluating instructional materials, suggesting this is not part of the current process. Once the committee recommends the curriculum for purchase, it goes through an approval process that includes the technology department, principals, and the superintendent before being submitted to the finance department.

At the time of the district review, the district was prioritizing elementary ELA for the next review because of the change in ratings of their current program, Fountas & Pinnell. This well-defined and inclusive process for reviewing curricula is a strength of the district.

Wachusett has established some formal professional learning structures to support educators in effectively implementing curricula. Teachers in all schools within the district receive training to ensure successful adoption of curricula in their classrooms. Recently, the district introduced communities of practice, allowing teachers to collaborate within their respective content areas. However, there are concerns about the consistency of information shared during districtwide professional development training sessions. A teacher expressed uncertainty about the extent to which they should implement specific programs because of inconsistent guidance received. Although structures are in place to support professional learning, schools vary in how much time is built into teachers’ schedules to collaborate on curriculum and instruction alignment, as well as data and student academic progress. At the elementary level, common planning time varies by school. Some school leaders report their staff convenes twice a month, whereas others share that teachers receive up to 45 minutes daily for common planning time. At the middle school level, some teachers reported weekly grade-level common planning opportunities, whereas other middle school teachers shared no common planning time allocated, with variations existing across schools. At the high school, teachers reported finding time to collaborate across departments. High school teachers also reported that scheduling common planning time will serve as one of the “big initiatives for next year.” Although there are times carved out at all levels for professional learning community (PLC) meetings, a general consensus across the district is that the allotted time is not always sufficient for comprehensive collaboration. Improving consistency across schools in how much common planning time teachers receive is an area of growth.

### Classroom Instruction

Five observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Wachusett during the week of May 1, 2023. The observers conducted 121 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, in addition to Student Engagement. The three domains observed at all levels broadly are defined as follows:

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

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

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

In summary, findings from the Wachusett observations were as follows:

* Emotional Support. Ratings were in the middle range for all three grand bands: 5.6 for K-5, 5.2 for 6-8, and 4.9 for 9-12.
* Classroom Organization. Ratings were in the high range (6.0-6.8) for all grade bands.
* Instructional Support. Ratings were in the low middle range for all three grand bands: 3.5 for K-5, 4.0 for 6-8, and 3.9 for 9-12.
* Student Engagement. For Grades 4 and up, where student engagement was measured as an independent domain, ratings were in the high middle range for Grades 4-5 (5.4), Grades 6-8 (5.6), and Grades 9-12 (5.6).

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

Interviews and a document review indicated that the district prioritizes standards-based, student-centered, and project-based instructional practices, although these practices vary somewhat by school. Teachers and school leaders described the many ways in which teachers work to modify their instruction and physical classroom space to encourage these practices, such as using centers and a variety of projects. To make the general education curriculum accessible to all students, Wachusett’s DCAP details resources and supports to meet the needs of diverse learners, such as flexible small-group instruction; multimodal instruction; graphic organizers; and the use of exemplars, checklists, and rubrics. Similarly, both special education and general education teachers identified clear expectations to adjust instruction and provide accommodations for students to best meet their needs.

In focus groups, elementary teachers described implementing project-based learning, engaging students through open-ended questions and assignment choices, using center-based learning, and integrating technology into the educational process. The middle and high schools also employ a combination of approaches, with a focus on increasing student voice and using workshop models to facilitate interactive and participatory learning experiences. These diverse approaches and strategies are a strength of the district because they reflect a commitment to creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment that empowers students and promotes their active involvement in their educational journey.

As described in the District and School Improvement Planning section, a district priority for the 2022-2023 school year has been revising and updating the DCAP and standardizing MTSS supports. According to the district’s DCAP, which at the time of the district review was being updated (i.e., a working draft), all students receive Tier 1 instruction in the general education classroom. According to the DCAP, Tier 1 instruction includes “adjustments and intentional design to instruction, routines, materials and environment so that all students are able to engage, acquire, and demonstrate their learning through multiple means.” For Tier 2, students are provided with:

changes to *how* a student learns and how they might demonstrate their learning, [which] may include various aspects of instruction such as how new content is presented, how assessments are conducted, how materials are organized, or how the classroom is set up.

Students who do not make adequate progress within Tier 2 interventions are referred to Tier 3, where they receive more intense, individualized supports. The district’s commitment to updating their MTSS documentation is a strength of the district to ensure that all students can access and make progress within the curriculum.

A review of Wachusett’s website indicated that the district has several programs available, with each town housing a specific program that is available to any student in the district who has been identified for specialized instruction. These programs are as follows:

* Applied Behavior Analysis Program (schools in Sterling, Mass.). A substantially separate classroom designed to address the educational needs of students with moderate to severe disabilities in the areas of social, communication, and cognitive development. Classes have multiple age groupings, with a small class size of usually eight or fewer students. The program is overseen by a board certified behavior analyst, a special education teacher, program assistants, and related service providers. Inclusion opportunities are encouraged for all students as appropriate and beneficial.
* Developmental Program (schools in Rutland, Mass.). A substantially separate PK-8 program to address the needs of students with moderate to severe disabilities in the areas of cognition, socialization, and communication. Curriculum focused on daily living is embedded into the academic curriculum. The program has a maximum capacity of 12 students with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:3. Inclusion opportunities are encouraged for all students as appropriate and beneficial.
* Transition Program (schools in Holden, Mass.). This K-8 program is for students with average cognitive ability but who struggle with impulse control, executive functioning, social skills, motivation, and/or anxiety. Classrooms are highly structured with supportive and therapeutic environments. Data are collected daily on each student’s ability to achieve the goals set in their individualized plan, and these data are analyzed quarterly. The program has a maximum capacity of 12 students with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:3.
* Language-Based Program (schools in Paxton, Mass.). This Grades 3-12 program serves students with specific learning disabilities in a substantially separate classroom. Students receive multisensory instruction in reading and learn study skills to better manage time, materials, and information to improve executive functioning. The program has a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:3 to provide a small, structured learning environment. Inclusion opportunities are encouraged for all students as appropriate and beneficial.
* Life Skills Program (Wachusett Regional High School). This program strives to develop and refine independent academic, vocational, daily living, and communication skills to prepare students for high school graduation. Students vary in ability, but all participate in vocational classes with an internship experience. Two classes serve students ages 14-18, and there is one postgraduate class for students ages 18-22.
* The Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (Wachusett Regional High School). This 12-week program provides support for students returning from long-term absences related to mental health issues or substance misuse.

These programs emphasize teaching students in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate for their needs.

Students described a supportive learning environment in which teachers provide additional time for assignment completion and opportunities for students to seek help during class. Students’ course preferences vary based on the teaching style employed by their instructors. Students described appreciating when teachers encourage their feedback and incorporate diverse perspectives into classroom discussions rather than relying solely on lecture-style teaching. However, high school students emphasized the need for some teachers to acknowledge and consider individual differences in learning styles, such as those outlined in 504 plans, and to deliver more engaging lessons. For example, students stated that they want more opportunities for class discussions and chances to move around. These sentiments indicate that there is still room for improvement in fully realizing the district’s commitment to creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment across all schools.

Wachusett is still in the early stages of embedding DEI into curriculum and instruction to foster learning, celebration, and engagement with different cultures and backgrounds. One high school student expressed the impact of the thoughtfully chosen curriculum, stating that it “helped [them] see the world from a different perspective that [they] don’t really have, whether it’s someone from like a different continent or from a different economic class or a different race facing different struggles.” The inclusion of diverse texts in the curriculum enabled this student to gain insights into the experiences of individuals from various backgrounds, broadening their understanding of the world. However, students described that these experiences are not yet consistent across their classes and vary by teacher. Although there are some early efforts to embed DEI into curriculum and instruction, it has not yet been a priority of the new district leadership and is an ongoing area of growth.

Although Wachusett understands the importance of developing students’ social and emotional competencies, few formal structures are in place to help students do so, which is an area for growth. According to teacher focus groups, social-emotional learning strategies are actively incorporated throughout the school day, including mindfulness, emotions, and problem-solving lessons; however, the district does not currently have a universal social-emotional curriculum across all schools that uses “common language.” Various stakeholders identified this issue as a need in the district.

### Student Access to Coursework

Wachusett is committed to providing a comprehensive educational experience that caters to the diverse interests and academic needs of its students, making this a strength for the district. At the elementary school level, students have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning through science labs and makerspaces. These interactive environments allow students to explore scientific concepts, conduct experiments, and develop their problem-solving skills. Students also participate in classes such as art, gym, and music.

At the middle school level, students have a wide range of elective courses that foster their personal interests and talents, such as joining a writing club to enhance their creative skills, participating in student council to develop leadership abilities, or attending language seminars to broaden their linguistic proficiency. In addition, the middle schools have advisory days built into their schedule in which students can join student clubs, allowing them to connect with peers and engage in collaborative activities. Students also participate in classes such as art, gym, and music.

At the high school level, students have a rigorous curriculum designed to challenge and prepare them for future endeavors. According to the Wachusett Regional High School 2023-2024 Educational Guide, a wide variety of opportunities are available to students, including in English (e.g., Dystopian Literature, Filmmaking, Journalism), mathematics (e.g., Applied Calculus and Finite Math, Advanced Mathematical Concepts), social studies (e.g., Civics for the 21st Century, Human Behavior, U.S. Government and Politics), and science (e.g., Environmental Science, Environmental Issues, Natural History of New England).

The district also offers 29 Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses, with AP courses potentially leading to college credit. At the time of the district review, the high school was experiencing decreased enrollment in AP courses in the past several years. This downturn was attributed, in part, to a grant ending that previously provided Saturday extra help sessions to improve students’ access to AP courses. School leaders also reported students making informed decisions to not enroll in AP courses: “Kids are making conscious efforts that [AP classes are] not where I want be. I can take a different course to get a very good experience but not be as stressed out as one AP course would provide.” According to DESE’s District Profile, most of the 11th and 12th grade students who enrolled in advanced coursework are predominantly White (87 percent compared to 84 percent of all high school students); and few are high needs students (13 percent compared to 28 percent of all high school students) or students with disabilities (4 percent compared to 15 percent of all high school students).[[5]](#footnote-6)

The high school also offers nine partnership programs that provide students with opportunities to gain career skills to be better prepared for the workforce. Each Wachusett Partnership Program (WPP) provides students with academic instruction, hands-on learning, and career readiness skills (e.g., résumé writing, interviewing practice). Students interested in pursuing a partnership program apply during the fall of their sophomore year, although WPP courses are open to all students (with preferences given to students already in the WPP). Partnership majors include the following:

* Automotive Technology. All students take Introduction to Automotive Technology and Automotive Technology I and II, plus electives such as Exploring Automotive Technology, an independent study, and more.
* Business/Finance. All students take Accounting I, Computer Applications, Advanced Accounting, and Personal Finance, plus electives such as AP Economics, Entrepreneurship, a banking internship, and more.
* Business/Marketing. All students take Marketing I and II, plus electives such as Exploring Basic Retail Management, Introduction to Business, Sports and Entertainment Marketing, an independent study, and more.
* Computer Science. All students take Exploring Computer Science I and II and Website Development, plus electives such as AP Computer Science, Computer and Network Fundamentals, AP Computer Science Principles, and more.
* Criminal Justice. All students take Criminal Justice I and II, plus electives such as AP Psychology, Civics for the 21st Century, History of Racism in America, Human Behavior, Sociology, and more.
* Early Childhood Education. All students take Child Study Preschool I, Child Study II Preschool Internship, and Child Study II Seminar.
* Engineering Technology. All students take Engineering and Architectural Design, Career Centered Engineering, Innovation and Invention, Advanced Manufacturing, Practical and Employable Skills, and MakerSpace I, plus electives such as Drawing I and II, Engineering Physics Projects, and more.
* Graphic Communication. All students take Graphic Communication I and II, plus elective classes such as Art Foundations, Commercial Art, Digital Illustration and Painting, Digital Photography, and more.
* Health Science. All students take Human Bodyworks, Survey of Medical and Allied Health Careers, plus elective classes such as Anatomy and Physiology, Foods for Healthy Living, Study of Human Behavior, and more.

If students successfully pass all required courses plus electives for a total of 15 major-specific credits (beyond the graduation requirements), students earn a WPP Certificate of Completion.

By offering a variety of specialized programs and actively addressing the needs of different student populations, the district demonstrates its commitment to promoting inclusive learning experiences for all students. However, despite the range of targeted programs, not all students have equitable access to rigorous learning experiences. The superintendent acknowledged that 30% of the student population is from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are students receiving special education services, and/or are ELs. Further, advanced coursework enrollment data indicate that students with high needs and students with disabilities are accessing these courses at disproportionately lower rates than their peers. Therefore, ensuring equitable access to advanced coursework and rigorous learning experiences is an area from growth for the district.

### Recommendations

* Where logistically feasible, the district should expand common planning time for teachers, so that all teachers – regardless of level or assignment – have an opportunity to collaborate and plan with their peers.
* The district should expand its selection and use of curricula that are representative of students’ diverse cultures and backgrounds.
* The district should adopt a district-wide social emotional curriculum that provides teachers and students with common concepts and terminology.
* The district should conduct a root cause analysis to diagnose barriers for students’ access to rigorous learning experiences and create a plan to reduce those obstacles.

## Assessment

Wachusett uses a range of assessments and data sources to drive effective instruction. Focus groups and interviews with school leaders, district leaders, and teachers and a document review highlight the district’s utilization of a diverse range of assessments, including those mandated at the school, district, and state levels. Educators have access to a variety of data to inform their classroom instruction, including the Fountas & Pinnell BAS, STAR, ACCESS for English learners, MCAS, Panorama for SEL, and teacher-developed assessments. Many of these assessments are administered at multiple points throughout the academic year. The district has established some systems and processes for supporting data use, although this is an area of growth for the district. The district also is working to improve sharing data with all staff across schools, as well as transparently sharing data with both students and their families. Students and families can assess student progress via PowerSchool, parent-teacher conferences, and report cards.

Table 4 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in assessment.

Table 4. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Assessment Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Data and assessment systems](#_Data_and_Assessment) | * The district uses multiple sources of data to provide a comprehensive picture of student performance. | * Developing staff comfort with new assessments, as well as identifying additional assessments that provide sufficient information for instruction |
| [Data use](#_Data_Use) | * School staff have formalized opportunities to review and discuss student data (e.g., PLCs, SSTs). * PLT meetings are a collaborative structure in which district and school leaders come together to review and share data. |  |
| [Sharing results](#_Sharing_Results) | * District leaders share data openly and transparently with the school committee and broader community. | * Fully implementing a comprehensive data system to provide data on the whole child * Sharing student performance data and progress with students and families in a timely manner |

### Data and Assessment Systems

Wachusett uses a variety of assessments and other related data to ensure that all teachers provide effective instruction to their students. The district collects multiple data sources numerous times throughout the school year. The district’s 2022-2023 Assessment Calendar references school-, district-, and state-required assessments that are administered within different quarters. At the time of the district review, teachers administered multiple assessments at least annually, including Fountas & Pinnell BAS (K-5), STAR: Literacy and Math Assessment (K-8), Panorama: SEL Screener (Grades 3-12), MCAS (Grades 3-10), ACCESS for EL students (K-12), AP examinations for students in AP courses (Grades 9-12), and assessments from the purchased curriculum (K-12). Other assessments cited by teachers in focus groups but not on the assessment calendar include Lexia, IXL, and curriculum-based measurement. The availability of multiple data sources to provide information about students’ academic performance and social-emotional competencies is a strength of the district.

At the time of the district review, several assessments had recently changed. For example, teachers first administered the BAS in the 2022-2023 school year after recently transitioning from the Developmental Reading Assessment. STAR was still relatively new to the district, with teachers administering it for the second school year. Generally, teachers had mixed perceptions of the BAS because they missed the written component in the Developmental Reading Assessment. In addition, teachers in focus groups felt as though they needed more data to drive their instruction and reported using assessments from their curriculum or creating and using their own assessments to use in their classrooms (e.g., daily check-ins, unit assessments). One teacher explained, “I don’t feel like we have any good consistent, districtwide assessments for reading or math to inform our instruction,” and another commented, “We have to find our own other assessments to drive our instruction.” Developing staff comfort with new assessments, as well as identifying additional assessments that provide sufficient information for instruction, is an area of growth.

### Data Use

School and district leaders spoke about the expectations to use data to drive continuous improvement and guide instructional practices. The importance of data use is highlighted in the DCAP working draft, which emphasizes that “assessments are used to inform instruction and student progress is monitored by the teacher.”

Across the district, each school has PLC staff meetings that occur on a monthly basis, a strength of the district. These meetings provide dedicated opportunities for school leaders to engage with teachers and collectively examine assessment data, facilitating discussions about instructional strategies, student progress, and areas that may require additional support. Data discussions take place during PLC meetings as well. A review of common planning time agendas found that teachers complete a form to guide their discussion, with prompts such as the following:

* “How did students do on the common formative assessment?”
* “Which questions were most difficult for students to answer?”
* “How do teachers teach these skills and this content to students?”
* “Does anything need to be changed/edited/improved with the common formative assessment for next year?”

Furthermore, many schools also conduct weekly grade-level meetings, which are used for quick updates and information sharing among educators within the same grade level.

In addition to these efforts, every school in the district has a building-based SST. According to the DCAP working draft, the SST “reviews academic, behavioral, attendance, and SEL [social-emotional learning] data for every student using universal screeners and other data in order to identify students in need of support.” The SST includes teachers from multiple grade levels, administrators, and others who are involved with the student (e.g., related service providers). The team is responsible for making recommendations to the teacher about appropriate supports and interventions. As a result of this process, a student success plan may be developed and periodically reviewed. Parents are notified when an SST meeting will be convened for their child, have an opportunity to provide input and information to the teacher that is captured in the referral form, and are updated afterward. A teacher explained, “it’s kind of best practice to have everybody on board talking to the student and then also with the family about if possible before or including what the recommendations were afterwards.”

The district also has structures in place for reviewing and using data. According to a district leader, this process typically involves several steps. First, following the conclusion of benchmark assessments, the district summarizes the data. Then school principals and the district superintendent convene to engage in discussions and review the data. As a district leader explained, they focus on comparing data from various points in time, such as “comparing last year’s beginning of the year to this year’s beginning of the year, comparing like the middle of the year and the beginning of the year data by grade level.” These comparisons allow them to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Subsequently, they establish protocols and processes based on the outcomes of these discussions. These protocols enable principals to return to their respective schools and effectively share the data with their staff. Furthermore, the superintendent mentioned that data also are reviewed during PLT meetings, which take place once per month. These meetings provide additional opportunities for collaborative analysis and reflection on the data, and are a strength of the district. By analyzing the data, district leaders gain valuable insights into overall student performance, identify trends and patterns, and inform decision-making processes related to instructional initiatives and resource allocation.

### Sharing Results

According to teacher focus groups, all teachers do not currently have access to relevant data, specifically for Panorama SEL surveys. According to a district leader, the district is not yet using the Panorama system to its full potential. The Panorama Student Success platform can include a wider variety of student data in one place (e.g., social-emotional learning surveys, grades, attendance, behavioral data) and create a “dashboard that shows all student data on one screen.” District leaders are working to ensure that all teachers have access to relevant student data. At the time of the district review, district leaders were training principals and assistant principals on the Student Success Platform during their monthly PLTs so that results can be better shared across relevant stakeholders, but this process had not yet been expanded to teachers. Fully implementing a comprehensive data system, such as Panorama’s Student Success Platform, to provide data on the whole child is an area of growth for the district so that educators can gain deeper insights into their students and respond appropriately.

Parents and families have access to their student’s PowerSchool and Google Classroom platforms, and PowerSchool is easily available on the district’s website. At the middle and high school levels, most parents report feeling “well informed” given the timeliness of “real-time” updates and detailed information shared by teachers. However, some parents noted limitations on the usefulness of PowerSchool based on the timeliness of data entry. One parent explained as follows:

There is zero consistency in how [PowerSchool is] used from teacher to teacher. Some of them are updating it all the time. Some are not updating it at all until the day before report cards. And it is so frustrating because it’s supposed to keep us informed, it’s supposed to be a tool to communicate. But if everybody isn’t using it consistently, then it’s really useless as far as I’m concerned.

At the elementary level, the frequency of communicating feedback about students’ progress varies. Parents typically receive feedback regarding their child’s progress only when report cards are issued or during parent-teacher conferences. Parents reported wanting more frequent feedback shared with them about their child’s progress, an area of growth for the district.

According to district and school leaders, empowering students to take ownership of their learning by sharing data with them regularly is a priority. Like parents, students have access to Powerschool, where they can view their grades, assignments, overall performance, and teacher comments and reflections. These interactive features allow teachers to provide valuable insights to students and their families, which creates opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and reflection. Students primarily use this platform to check their grades but, according to focus groups, the aforementioned inconsistencies in data entry make it difficult for students to gauge how they are doing in class. As one student shared, “[Timeliness] depends on the teacher, most of them are really fast. But some of them wait a long time until it’s the end of quarter and then you can’t fix [the assignment].”

As district leaders are committed to transparency and accountability, they also share results more broadly with the school committee and the community, a strength of the district. The school committee has an education subcommittee in which district leaders present student progress data. This subcommittee serves as a platform for district leaders to provide updates on student achievement, discuss trends, and share the district’s progress toward educational goals. This collaborative effort ensures that key stakeholders, including committee members, are well informed about the district’s student performance and can actively contribute to shaping educational policies and initiatives.

### Recommendations

* The district should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its assessments, as well as the supports to utilize assessment data, to ensure the tools provide teachers with accurate, valuable information to inform their instruction.
* The district should consider adopting a data system that incorporates academic measures, social-emotional measures, and other datapoints in a single location.
* The district should set clear expectations for staff around timeliness for posting comments and grades online, so that students and families can take an active part in student learning.

## Human Resources and Professional Development

Human resources is an area that district leaders want to improve in upcoming years. At the time of the district review, the district hired an outside firm to complete a comprehensive human resources audit that provided a number of recommendations to improve the district’s practices. Currently, the human resources department is mainly paper driven, and district leaders are working to digitize records, such as employee benefits and time cards, to improve accuracy, give staff members more autonomy, and make record-keeping practices more efficient. The district is currently undergoing some large administrative changes and hopes to add more teachers to its workforce to decrease class sizes and teacher-to-student ratios. Although the district reportedly has a large applicant pool for new teachers within the district, at the time of the district review, district leaders had not yet identified explicit strategies for teacher diversification.

All new teachers within the district participate in the district’s comprehensive mentoring program during their first and second years. Mentor teachers receive a stipend for their work and meet regularly with mentee teachers, introducing them to the district and the district’s evaluation platform and conducting nonevaluative observations to improve their teaching.

Wachusett does not have formal, district-wide methods to recognize superior teachers for their work, aside from shout-outs by peer teachers or administrators within their schools. There are also few opportunities for teachers to participate in meaningful leadership opportunities within the district.

Table 5 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in human resources and professional development.

Table 5. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Human Resources and Professional Development Standard

| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Infrastructure](#_Infrastructure) | * The human resources department has been working to draft and standardize documents regarding the department’s policies and procedures. * The human resources department recently updated their recruitment documentation. | * Creating a plan for how to digitalize the human resources department to ensure accuracy and timeliness in record-keeping |
| [Recruitment, hiring, and assignment](#_Recruitment,_Hiring,_and) | * School leaders include broad representation from across stakeholder groups when hiring administrators to gather diverse perspectives on candidates. | * Addressing the teacher-to-student ratio and decreasing class sizes in accordance with district policy * Identifying and implementing an explicit strategy for teacher diversification in the district |
| [Supervision, evaluation, and educator development](#_Supervision,_Evaluation,_and) | * The professional development committee structure facilitates teachers and administrators having a voice in the professional development they receive and provides opportunities to receive feedback and adjust professional learning opportunities. * The district’s mentorship program is well defined and comprehensive to support new teachers during their first and second years in the district. | * Addressing district-wide inconsistencies in the evaluation process and ensuring that feedback is constructive and timely * Ensuring that teacher evaluations are complete and compliant by providing teachers with constructive feedback to improve instruction * Ensuring administrator evaluations are consistently completed at the end of each evaluation cycle |
| [Recognition, leadership development, and advancement](#_Recognition,_Leadership_Development) |  | * Creating district-wide formal structures to recognize strong teacher performance Creating opportunities for and encouraging participation in meaningful teacher leadership activities |

### Infrastructure

Wachusett’s human resources department consists of a director of human resources and staff members who manage benefits, onboarding, payroll, and retirement reporting. Until recently, the human resources department was understaffed, though at the time of the district review, all positions in the department were filled. In planning for upcoming years, several district leaders identified areas for improvement related to policies and procedures. To guide this process, district leaders reported hiring an accounting firm, CliftonLarsonAllen, to perform an audit of Wachusett’s practices for the Human Resources and Business departments. A district leader summarized the findings:

Basically, what it said is that our practices in HR [human resources] are extremely antiquated. We are extremely paper dependent, like we are the traditional school system where you have a pile of paper that goes from one person’s desk to another person’s desk and there’s a fair amount of human error.

To address issues identified in the audit, the human resources department has taken several steps to digitalize their system. According to interviews, the district digitalized the open enrollment for benefits so that staff members can sign up for benefits each year according to their needs without having to physically meet with human resources representatives. District leaders also reported that the human resources department is working on digitalizing records related to hiring and recruitment, using the district’s Munis system, so that district and school leaders will be able to identify trends related to hiring.

One important area for improvement identified by district leaders and the audit is the digitalization of employee time cards. According to interviewees, the district has used paper time cards to keep track of more than 900 full-time employees within the district, plus an additional 200 part-time workers, coaches, and substitutes. The enormous amount of paper that department members must manage to accurately record hours and compensate workers caused several district and school leaders to voice concerns regarding the need for duplicate records and an efficient and standardized workflow. District leaders also mentioned concerns about the current paper system, such as reading staff members’ handwriting on paper time cards and the inability for current staff to double-check the human resources personnel members’ interpretation of their recorded hours. These concerns also were identified in the audit, which described “outdated processes used to create payroll time records (‘grids’) done on paper every pay cycle,” that “grids are inconsistently approved,” and that “HR [is] heavily bogged down in paper.” To address some of these challenges, members of the business office meet with the human resources department on a biweekly basis for a system of “checks and balances between the two departments.” In the coming months, district leaders hope to take several important steps to digitalize time cards, although at the time of the District Review, there was not yet a formalized plan for how to do so. Creating a plan for digitizing the time sheet process to improve record keeping and efficiency is an area of growth for the district.

At the time of the district review, the human resources department recently updated documentation regarding the district’s recruitment efforts, including job fair recruitment procedures and handouts; onboarding policies and checklists, including a standardized email to new hires; a newly drafted policy statement regarding DEI; and the district’s induction and mentoring policies and programs. These newly created and updated records are a strength of the district and will be further strengthened by the development of more documentation as the human resources department develops more standardized policies and procedures.

### Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment

District leaders self-identified hiring and recruiting processes as areas for growth. As described in the fiscal year 2024 Budget Presentation, and reiterated by stakeholders across the district, improving class sizes by decreasing teacher-to-student ratios is an area that needs to be addressed. According to the district-created Enrollment and Class Size Report for fiscal year 2023, K-8 class size reports showed approximately 60 classes in which the number of students was above the maximum class size dictated by the school committee’s Policy 3510, which is between 19-23 students, depending on grade range. Parents in focus groups also reported that class sizes in Wachusett were “too large” and believed that the large class sizes were negatively affecting their children’s learning. To address this challenge, the 2024 budget allocates funding for 11 school-level positions, including eight elementary teachers, 1 English Learner Education teacher, and two guidance counselors . . As described in the 2024 document, these additional staff will “remedy the inequities [in staffing] between schools,” though many teachers and district leaders reported that even with these new staffing additions, they felt that educator assignment was inequitable in the district. Teachers pointed to Mountview Middle School, where teachers teach an extra class compared with other schools in the district, as an example of inequity in assignments. Continuing to address class sizes and teacher-to-student ratios to remain within the district’s policy is an ongoing area for growth for the district.

In terms of recruiting new staff members, district leaders reported that the district has “a good stream of candidates other than [for] special education” to choose from, and they expect to fill the new proposed positions within the district in a reasonable time . However, despite the reportedly large candidate pool, limited diversity exists within Wachusett’s staff. According to DESE’s Employed Educators Report, 96 percent of administrators and 99 percent of teachers are white. Some members of district and school leadership stated that this lack of diversity in staffing was an issue that needs to be rectified, whereas other stakeholders within the community pushed back against intentional diversification of the workforce. Although some key leadership members within the district are committed to increasing staff diversity, they have not identified a defined strategy to diversify their applicant pool. As one district leader stated:

I wouldn’t give us too much more credit than [talking about this issue]. We know it’s an issue, we have a talk about it, and we talk about it as a good way to make sure we’re looking at that experience piece because I think that’s a huge thing. And it’s a thing for our kids, too. I look at, we’re sending kids out into the world with an extremely narrow viewpoint of the world. Like this one dominant narrative, which is all they’ve been exposed to. And I think we acknowledge that that’s not in their, or anybody’s, best interest.

An area for growth in Wachusett is identifying and implementing an explicit strategy for teacher diversification in the district.

In terms of hiring new candidates, hiring processes within Wachusett occur primarily at the school level, with minimal involvement from the human resources department. Currently, human resources becomes more actively involved once a school would like to extend an offer to a candidate, at which point district leaders determine compensation and facilitate the offer. The human resources audit identified several recommendations for the district to further improve hiring, including better use of SchoolSpring and PowerSchool for hiring and onboarding and human resources being more actively involved in hiring across the district (e.g., training interviewers, retaining feedback on candidates, ensuring candidates have proper qualifications).

In general, the hiring process for administrators engages a variety of stakeholders at the school level. For example, teachers within focus groups reported that during the past school year, four new principals were hired in the district, and during the hiring process, stakeholder groups from across the schools were included and able to voice their opinions on these new school leaders. The inclusion of broad representation during the administrator hiring process is an area of strength for the district.

### Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development

Within Wachusett, teachers reported that the evaluation process is highly variable. To start the evaluation process, teachers draft their goals for the year, which are supposed to align to school and district goals for the year. Then, depending on the school, educators will observe teachers three times per school year and provide feedback. According to focus groups with teachers, the feedback from evaluations is highly variable by the school and administrator, with some principals and assistant principals providing useful, actionable feedback, whereas others provide more generic feedback. One educator summarized the sentiments of several teachers:

But even historically, you know, you have your formal observations, but sometimes it’s helpful, sometimes it’s not. It’s very administrator specific. Some are lovely and wonderful about giving feedback and helpful and intuitive. And you’re like, “Oh, hey, thank you.” And others, you go, “oh, okay. Yeah. That didn’t actually help me improve my teaching, improve my strategies, or let me know that I missed something or that I need to add something.” So I think that’s definitely across the board an area that teachers would love constructive, helpful, timely feedback.

Inconsistencies in evaluation methods also was a commonly discussed topic in focus groups. For example, some evaluators reportedly require teachers to submit evidence electronically into TeachPoint for their evaluation, whereas others don’t have this requirement. In addition, some evaluators reportedly rarely rate teachers as exemplary, whereas others do it routinely within their school building. Further, some teachers reported that evaluators came into their classrooms on a regular weekly basis to check-in and do informal observations, whereas other teachers reported that evaluators never came into their classrooms for informal evaluations, and even their formal evaluations were rarely completed on time. Overall, addressing these district-wide inconsistencies in the evaluation process and ensuring that feedback is constructive and timely is an area for growth in Wachusett.

District records suggest that teacher evaluations are consistently uploaded to TeachPoint. A review of the educator evaluation files indicated that teachers received ratings and feedback on their performance based on the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample of 27 professional teacher status teachers scheduled for a summative evaluation for the 2021-2022 school year. Of the 27 teacher evaluations selected for review, 26 summative evaluations were available for review. Of those 26 evaluations reviewed, 25 evaluations (96 percent) were complete and not missing required components, such as ratings for each standard or an overall rating. A review of the records showed that the expected use of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals is consistent. The review of evaluation documents indicated that nearly all evaluations (96 percent) contained student learning and professional practice SMART goals. The majority of evaluations (81 percent) referenced 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. Nearly all summative evaluations (92 percent) included feedback for each standard, 96 percent of the evaluations included feedback identifying strengths, whereas only two evaluations (less than 1 percent) included feedback identifying areas of improvement. Ensuring that teacher evaluations are complete and compliant by providing teachers with constructive feedback to improve instruction is an area of growth.

District records suggest that administrator evaluations are inconsistently uploaded to TeachPoint. From a list of 28 administrators due for a summative evaluation in 2021-2022, only 15 evaluations (54 percent) were available for review. Of those 15 summative evaluations available for review, only 14 evaluations were complete with performance ratings and assessment of progress toward goals. Of the 15 summative evaluations reviewed, 14 evaluations (93 percent) included student learning goals and professional practice goals, whereas 13 evaluations (86 percent) included a school improvement goal. Seven evaluations (47 percent) included or referenced multiple sources of evidence to assess performance on summative evaluation standards. Only 10 evaluations (67 percent) reviewed included evaluator comments. The majority of evaluation feedback (73 percent) identified each administrator’s strengths, and only three evaluations (20 percent) reviewed provided administrators with identified areas for improvement. Ensuring administrator evaluations are consistently completed at the end of each evaluation cycle is an area of growth for the district.

Professional development is a strength of Wachusett because it is informed by teachers’ needs and aligns with schools’ goals for the school year. Wachusett has a professional development committee, consisting of three teachers from the teachers’ union and three administrators, that meets monthly. Twice a year, the committee provides a platform for teachers to submit requests for topics they would like to have professional development on, presenters that they would recommend, or topics that they would like to lead professional development on. The committee also creates a feedback survey on professional development for teachers to take after professional development days. Based on a survey drafted and administered by the professional development committee, after a professional development session on November 8, 2022, of those who participated in the full-day event, 85.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “the professional development provided me with knowledge/resources that I can use to enhance my practice,” and 77.9% agreed or strongly agreed that “this professional development helped me to meet personal/school/district professional goals.” The professional development committee structure is an area of strength for the district because it facilitates teachers and administrators having a voice in the professional development they receive and provides opportunities to receive feedback and adjust professional learning opportunities to better meet staff needs.

District leaders reported that the district provides a wide variety of professional development topics relating to curriculum and teaching practices, such as culturally responsive teaching, social-emotional learning, Universal Design for Learning, and trauma-informed care. The district also helps their teachers with recertification through professional development and offers a Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages 15-hour training after school each year. Teachers, according to their contract, also can request and receive reimbursement for other coursework not offered by the district.

Mentoring for new teachers is a norm in Wachusett and is supported by a documented system of peer support that includes observations and feedback. The deputy superintendent and school principals manage the mentoring program, and they try to match mentors and mentees based on similarities in grade level and subject area. According to the 2022-2023 Teacher Mentoring Posting document, serving as a mentor is a stipend position. When a mentoring position becomes available, teachers can sign up using the district’s application form. In addition, the district provides a standardized job description for mentor teachers that details the stipend amount per hour that mentor teachers receive for their first and second year of mentorship as well as the qualifications to be a mentor and the essential duties and responsibilities of being a mentor. Some of the duties and responsibilities include meeting on a regular basis with their mentee teacher, strengthening the mentee teacher’s knowledge and expectations of the teacher evaluation system, performing nonevaluative peer observation with pre-post conferencing with the mentee teacher, and keeping up to date with their Mentoring Log. Mentee teachers must devote 15 hours to mentorship during the first year and 10 hours during the second year. In addition, mentee teachers must attend a three-day training during their first year and a two-day training during their second year. Overall, the mentorship program in Wachusett is well defined to support new teachers and is a strength of the district.

### Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement

Teachers and school leaders almost unanimously agreed that few districtwide structures are in place to formally recognize superior teachers. Although school leaders described few formal and professional methods of recognizing superior teachers for their work, they each described informal methods by which they recognized the teachers in their school. For example, one school leader described having a “top banana trophy” that teachers could give to one another to encourage each other. At another school, a school leader described a “Thumbs Up Award” that they could give to anyone, either a teacher or other staff member, to recognize extra effort beyond the scope of their normal work. Another school leader described their schoolwide Teacher Appreciation Week, which celebrated all teachers in that school on the first day of the fall semester with donuts and cider. These different methods of informal teacher recognition are positive for the district, although there are insufficient district-wide formal structures to recognize strong teacher performance, an area for growth.

In addition to having few formal structures in place to recognize teachers, teachers frequently reported that the better their performance, the more responsibility they received. School leaders acknowledged this issue, with one commenting as follows:

I’ve had multiple teachers, especially last year actually say they’re going to stop working as hard because the harder they work, the more work is given to them. The better they prove to be, the more responsibility is placed on them. And they’re getting to a point where they’ve been doing it for so long that they’ve reached their max of—I can’t take any more [responsibility].

Further, district and school leaders agreed that few teachers were incentivized to advance into leadership positions and that there were no clear pathways to exercising leadership. Teachers specifically reported those in leadership positions within schools were known to make less money than teachers who had been in their positions for a long time. As one school leader summarized,

Then we start talking about teacher leadership and encouraging teachers to move to leadership positions, our teachers get paid so well that it’s almost a pay cut to become an assistant principal in the district . . . so why take on that added responsibility?

Overall, creating opportunities for and encouraging participation in meaningful teacher leadership activities is an area for growth in the district.

### Recommendations

* The district should continue its process of digitalization, including the development and implementation of an electronic timekeeping system.
* Where financially feasible, the district should address inconsistencies around class size between school committee policy and reality.
* The district should develop an explicit strategy around staff diversification and embed it within district hiring practices.
* The district should set expectations around evaluations and feedback to ensure that all staff (teachers and administrators) are receiving constructive feedback that helps them become more effective in their work.
* The district should regularly review the completion of administrator reviews, to ensure compliance with evaluation cycles.
* The district should develop formal means of recognizing teacher performance across all schools, so that school leaders need not rely as heavily on informal means of recognition.
* Where feasible, the district should address the perceived disincentives of advancing to leadership positions, and develop new pathways to provide educators with opportunities to grow in their careers.

## Student Support

Wachusett is making conscious efforts to ensure that schools support students’ safety, well-being, and sense of belonging by identifying and addressing students’ needs and engaging families and students. Wachusett is actively incorporating various practices to meet the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students, and efforts are under way to establish clear safety protocols and promote a positive school culture. However, challenges related to the need for comprehensive DEI initiatives exist. Wachusett provides an MTSS to address students’ needs and is the process of updating this documentation to ensure clarity and consistency across the district. The district also has various community partnerships and engagement opportunities to support families and enhance student experiences. The district is actively working toward providing equitable support and honoring diverse cultures.

Table 6 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in student support.

Table 6. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Student Support Standard

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| [Safe and supportive school climate and culture](#_Safe_and_Supportive) | * Results of the District Instructional Observation Report and Views of Climate and Learning survey indicate strong school climate across the district at the elementary and middle school levels. * The high school has a variety of student clubs and activities that help students feel connected to school. | * Improving the high school’s culture and climate so that all students feel safe, supported, and welcomed * Improving tolerance and inclusivity across the district |
| [Tiered systems of support](#_Tiered_Systems_of) | * The district has a well-defined SST process to make collaborative decisions about students. | * Clarifying guidance on the supports available in each tier across the district * Addressing need for more staff to serve students’ academic and social emotional needs |
| [Family, student, and community engagement and partnerships](#_Family,_Student,_and) | * District and school leaders and staff use various communication mechanisms to provide updates to families. * The district has various community partnerships to provide valuable resources and support to students and families. | * Keeping online resources for families up-to-date with relevant information |

### Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

Wachusett recognizes the importance of creating a safe and supportive school environment in which students feel a sense of belonging and have opportunities to succeed academically, behaviorally, and socially. Schools vary in their implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), although the essential elements of PBIS are included as potential supports for students struggling behaviorally according to the DCAP working draft (e.g., posting classroom expectations, using incentives and positive reinforcers). If schools are not formally implementing PBIS, they must have a behavior system to foster a safe, supportive school climate and develop discipline practices and expectations. Although the district does not currently have consistent positive behavioral approaches, the districtwide instructional observation scores on the Behavior Management dimension of the CLASS tool are high for all grade bands (6.4 for K-5, 6.8 for 6-8, and 6.7 for 9-12). These results suggest that the rules and guidelines for behavior are generally clear and consistently reinforced by teachers. Student feedback collected through the Views of Climate and Learning survey provides additional evidence of relatively strong school climates across schools within the district. The survey scores consistently fall on the higher end at the elementary and middle schools, reaching approximately 55, which is in the “somewhat favorable” category. It indicates that the efforts of the district and its schools to create a safe and supportive climate are generally successful, which is a strength of the district.

One of the primary areas of focus for the district at the elementary level is maintaining physical safety for both students and staff. An elementary school staff member emphasized that the implementation of safety protocols was a direct decision the principals made, reflecting a top-down approach. These protocols addressed building safety procedures.

At the middle school level, students in focus groups generally reported positive school climates, describing their schools as “very welcoming” and “very accepting of who everyone is.” However, at the high school level, both parent and student focus groups brought forth accounts of racism within the school community. As described by a parent and mentioned in school committee minutes, a group of students went to a school committee meeting last year (the 2021-2022 school year) to make them aware of these incidents, and reportedly, “some subset of the school committee didn’t believe it. And the students stood up and said, this is what I experienced. And people still said, ‘oh no, it doesn’t happen.’” During the 2022-2023 school year, the school committee adopted a policy to bring awareness to the importance of DEI Regardless of whether these incidents did or did not occur, stakeholders described an urgent need to address issues of school culture and students' sense of safety so that all students feel valued. These experiences can negatively impact the school culture and students’ sense of safety and well-being, indicating an area of growth so that all students feel safe, supported, and welcomed.

Despite some students reporting incidences of racist behavior, the high school nevertheless offers outlets to promote inclusion through a variety of student-led clubs and organizations. According to the high school’s list of clubs, musical groups, honor societies, and athletics overview posted on its website, the school has a wide variety of options for students. Examples include an agricultural club (focused on cultivating plants and raising chickens), an Artemis group (focused on women’s health and safety), a drama club (focused on the performing arts), and many more. The school has several groups focused on DEI topics, such as the diversity inclusion group, the Asian student association, the Arabic club, the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and a Muslim student association. These groups intend to provide a safe space for students to learn about different cultures and sexual identities and share their experiences, challenges, and successes. The middle schools also offer some clubs, although there are fewer offered. Clubs varied by school but included opportunities like student council, ski club, yearbook club, and drama club. Such initiatives show that the middle and high schools are committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment so that all students feel connected to school, which is an area of strength for the district.

Wachusett is still in the early stages of implementing equitable approaches that benefit all students, although the district’s new DEI policy emphasizes its commitment to this work. At the time of the district review, the district had a director of social-emotional learning, guidance, and equity, although this individual primarily had other responsibilities within the central office. The district is beginning to provide professional development to staff on DEI so that they are better able to recognize and understand the unique aspects of various cultures. For example, Ramadan was observed in late March and April, a significant observance for many students who fast during that period. To ensure these students felt supported, the district made a conscious effort to raise awareness among classroom teachers by informing teachers of students who may have refrained from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset. To accommodate these students, some schools offered their classrooms during lunchtime, allowing the fasting students to engage in games and other activities, thereby avoiding potential discomfort in the cafeteria where other students might be unfamiliar with this practice. By fostering this level of awareness and creating inclusive initiatives, the district aims to cultivate a positive and understanding culture that respects and celebrates the diversity of its student body. This remains an area of growth for the district because, despite some positive steps taken to improve tolerance and inclusivity, the district does not yet ensure that all students feel safe and supported.

### Tiered Systems of Support

The district implements an MTSS to ensure the success of all students. At the time of the district review, district leaders were updating the DCAP and other MTSS documents, in alignment with their three-year-gap-closing Student Opportunity Act Plan.

As described in the DCAP working draft, Tier 1 focuses on general classroom instruction, with data regularly collected through assessments, observations, and surveys. This tier includes intentional adjustments to instruction, routines, materials, and the learning environment to ensure that all students can engage, acquire, and demonstrate their learning. If a student does not meet the instructional expectations in Tier 1, they receive Tier 2 supports, which often involves referral to the SST. During Tier 2, if a student is not making progress, the team initiates a student success plan that includes goal setting and determining appropriate accommodations to support their growth. For students in need of intensive individualized support, Tier 3 supports are available. Services in this tier are provided through a referral process, building on Tiers 1 and 2. As the district finalizes the DCAP, there is a recognized area for growth related to clearer guidance on the supports available in each tier across the entire district. Multiple school staff commented on this, as exemplified through the following comment, “I would love some more clarity on the tiers as a district and to have some more kind of top-down focus and clarity on the different tiers.”

To cater to the diverse needs of students, the district offers a range of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions and support services. Having dedicated time within the school day for students to receive supports varies by school. At the elementary level, a dedicated block of time (sometimes called study hall or advisory block, the exact name varies by school) allows students to approach their teachers for additional help and clarification on challenging subjects. At the middle school level, schools have a similar structure (often called X block) and afterschool tutoring sessions are available to all students, not just those with individualized education programs. In addition, a select group of students can benefit from targeted assistance during homeroom, facilitated by paraprofessionals who offer personalized academic support. At the high school level, a peer tutoring program allows students to seek help from their fellow classmates who excel in specific subjects. This program not only enhances understanding but also cultivates a collaborative and supportive atmosphere among students. However, afterschool tutoring with individual teachers is challenging because high school teachers do not have a contractual obligation to provide tutoring beyond their regular school hours. Consequently, students may encounter difficulties in equitably accessing teacher-led academic support.

To connect students with available interventions, the district has a well-established, collaborative SST process. According to the DCAP working draft, teachers may refer students who exhibit challenges at Tier 1 to the SST for “additional support, help, and ideas.” Prior to initiating the process, the teacher must communicate with the student’s parents/guardians about their concerns. To begin the SST process, the teacher completes an SST referral form and submits it to the principal or the SST facilitator. The SST then convenes to review the student’s information with the classroom teacher and make recommendations on strategies or interventions and next steps. According to the working draft, recommendations typically focus on “instruction, assessment, environment, materials, social/behavior, [or] executive function.” Following the creation of a plan, the teacher implements the new strategies or interventions and monitors progress for six to eight weeks, with progress documented in the student’s support plan. Generally, this process seemed to work well according to interviews and focus groups, although district leaders would like the SSTs to have more special education representation on the team. Even though this process is not solely for referrals to special education, these specialists have knowledge and expertise that may be helpful to include from the beginning of the process. While there is room for further improvement, this well-defined process is a strength of the district.

Part of developing a comprehensive MTSS framework is allocating staff to provide supports; according to focus groups, there is a perception of insufficient staff to serve students’ academic and social emotional needs, a self-identified area of growth for the district. The district has made efforts to meet students’ post-pandemic needs by hiring middle school counselors and a director of special education and pupil services. In addition, the fiscal year 2024 budget allocates funds to hire several new staff positions, including two guidance counselors and eight elementary teachers (see the Adequate Budget section). However, district leaders believe that more staff will be necessary (e.g., reading specialists, special education teachers). A district leader explained how this effects their ability to support all students:

We all know the kids had disrupted learning over a couple of years. And we don’t have the infrastructure right now to catch those kids. And that makes me very worried. And it’s not a question [to ask] teachers who are already working extremely hard to, “Oh, just give me a little more.” I think they are at the point where . . . I look at it as a saturation point. They don’t have much left to give.

### Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

Wachusett ensures that schools provide two-way communication and access for all students’ families, including providing interpretation and translation services to families, as appropriate. Families receive a monthly newsletter sent via [Smore](https://www.smore.com/) that advertises monthly events and school activities. Families also receive weekly updates from the superintendent via blog posts. Principals send out weekly school updates via blog posts, emails, and social media posts, although one parent noted that updates of events on the school’s website and weekly blasts are inconsistent. Families can access student progress via PowerSchool (see the Sharing Results section). Teachers reported using ClassDojo to share regular updates and pictures of students during learning activities, which provides families a glimpse of their child’s learning experience. Parents and school committee members generally had positive impressions of the district’s communication with them, commenting, “I think digitally, I think the parents are really well informed” and “I do like the fact that the superintendent now has a weekly blog.” Overall, district and school leaders use various communication mechanisms to provide updates to families, a strength of the district.

In addition to communication, the district is taking active strides to provide parent engagement opportunities, especially for families of ELs and students with disabilities. The district offered adult English as a second language (ESL) beginner courses at a library in one of their schools, which was sponsored by Title III funding. The district also has an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) and Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) that work to advocate for the understanding of, respect for, and support for ELs and students with disabilities across the district. The ELPAC does not have any information on the district’s website, which may limit parents’ awareness of and access to this group for more information. The SEPAC meets monthly and has a website available on the district’s website; however, a review of SEPAC’s webpage found outdated information, with the most recently posted meeting minutes from the 2020-2021 school year. Given limited access to current information about either group, keeping online resources for families up-to-date with relevant information is an area for growth.

Wachusett has various community partnerships to enhance support for its students and families. One collaboration involves partnering with the local food bank through joint efforts with the parent-teacher organization to organize food drives. In the past, the district successfully conducted a cereal drive, gathering donations to assist the broader community by providing much-needed resources to the local food bank. The district also has partnerships with local community organizations that offer vocational opportunities specifically tailored for students with disabilities. Recognizing the significance of work experience for these students, one of the district’s goals in upcoming years is to explore and develop further partnerships that can provide valuable support in this area. Wachusett has partnered with the Interface Referrals Service, a centralized referral service that expedites access to outpatient and external therapeutic support for families. This collaboration significantly benefits families by reducing wait times and connecting them with appropriate professionals, addressing the challenges of finding suitable therapy options. These partnerships demonstrate Wachusett’s commitment to fostering community collaboration and providing valuable resources and support to students and families, which is a strength of the district.

### Recommendations

* The district should address issues of culture and school safety at the high school, particularly around racism, to ensure that all students – regardless of race or background – feel accepted.
* The district should develop a district-wide vision for MTSS in which tiers are explicitly defined, so that staff have a clear understanding of the structures and supports to provide to students.
* The district should regularly assess caseloads and staffing needs relative to external benchmarks, and add staff (where financially feasible).
* The district should partner with ELPAC and SEPAC to ensure information is regularly updated and families can access recent information about the district.

## Financial and Asset Management

The district is currently updating its budget documentation and reporting processes. The district’s fiscal year 2024 Budget Book includes allocating funds for new staffing positions across multiple schools. To fund these needs, the district has requested a larger percentage of discretionary funds from towns than ever before.

The district maintains 13 schools across five towns and has recommitted to investing and communicating transparently about the district’s capital needs in upcoming years. Any capital needs greater than $35,000 are covered by the towns, who own the majority of the school buildings; the district manages anything under that amount. The district and town leaders work collaboratively with one another, with increased transparency under the new district administration.

Table 7 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management.

Table 7. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard

| Indicator | Strengths | Areas for growth |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [Budget documentation and reporting](#_Budget_Documentation_and) | * There was strong collaboration between district leaders, school administrators, and town officials in developing the overall budget for fiscal year 2024. | * Tracking and controlling current year expenditures |
| [Adequate budget](#_Adequate_Budget) | * The superintendent presented data-driven requests to the towns to increase transparency and rebuild trust regarding district funding. * There is an increased level of transparency regarding the district’s budget and increased communication between district leaders and town leaders. |  |
| [Financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits](#_Financial_Tracking,_Forecasting,) |  | * Finishing DESE end-of-year reporting on time * Completing yearly audits, according to district requirements, in a timely manner * Updating cash reconciliation procedures according to recommendations of the fiscal year 2021 audit * Updating financial records in Munis to accurately reflect historical expense data and help district leaders forecast spending amounts for future budget development |
| [Capital planning and facility maintenance](#_Capital_Planning_and) | * District leaders’ early prioritization of facility maintenance and identifying capital improvement needs. | * Updating the Wachusett Capital Expenditure Budget for fiscal years 2021 through 2030, based on the facilities walkthroughs conducted in summer 2022 * Identifying a reliable strategy for acquiring the money from towns to make the anticipated repairs and updates to infrastructure |

### Budget Documentation and Reporting

Budget documentation and reporting is a self-identified area of growth in Wachusett. In the fiscal year 2024 Budget Book, district leaders cited the biggest priorities in the district are “update[ing] and correct[ing] many of our operational systems. This includes our budgeting process, which has not provided a true accounting of what it costs to run the district or properly advocated for student needs.” Previous budget documents lacked accurate records of historical spending data for stakeholders to understand and contextualize the current year’s resource allocations, a weakness of the district. According to interviews with district leaders, Wachusett district leaders previously created the budget by adding a percentage increase to the prior year’s budget, which did not consider what the actual district spending was in the prior year.

This year, district leaders have been focusing on improving their financial records and building their upcoming fiscal year’s budget based on accurate and detailed accounts of the previous year’s expenditures. A district leader summarized as follows:

I think we took a step in the correct direction this year, and we based our budget based on actual expenditures for the previous, for fiscal year, 2023 and 2022. And then we looked at even the salary budget lines and put people actually behind those budget lines according to their bargaining unit agreements and elevated them. And then from there, we figured out, okay, how much are our minimum local contributions going to be? How much are we getting in Chapter 70? How much are the towns required to pay for services for transportation, some other nondiscretionary expenditures? And then came and took the difference between the two and said, all right, we need this much more from the towns in nondiscretionary to make our expenditures meet.

Multiple district leaders reported contributing to this effort to calculate the previous year’s financial records, organize the various funding accounts within the district, and clarify previous ambiguity in the budget.

The district still has room for improvement in developing financial reporting documents, as evidenced by the need to institute a budget spending freeze of discretionary funds in February 2023. According to district leaders, this budget freeze was implemented because of confusion related to where the district was with current spending and a fear of overspending for a second consecutive year. The school committee had positive impressions of this decision by the superintendent, commenting that it was “very sufficient.” Tracking and controlling current year expenditures is an area for growth in Wachusett, with district leaders having taken corrective steps toward improvement.

For the upcoming fiscal year (2024), district leaders described strong collaboration between district leaders, school administrators, and town officials in developing the overall budget, a strength of the district. As reported by numerous district leaders, a major priority of district leaders has been rebuilding trust with town leaders after the budget issues of previous years. District leaders also are trying to secure additional funds from town contributions to maintain Wachusett’s current level of programming and services and expand personnel to reduce class size and meet the reported needs of students across the district. To accomplish this, district leaders have been meeting with town administrators monthly, and district leaders attend town meetings to communicate directly with the public. These public meetings were reportedly very well received, with one district leader saying that “[the towns are] very thankful for the transparency, for the work that went into [the meetings]. It was apparent. The amount of information we provided them, the ability to answer questions. They were very comfortable with all that.” This process has reportedly strengthened the relationship between the district and towns because district leaders transparently communicate about the budget and acknowledge and rectify past budgetary mistakes. As further evidence of these strengthened relationships, at the time of the district review, some towns had recently approved increasing their allocation over the minimum local contribution number to provide additional funds to the district for the upcoming fiscal year.

The district’s budget books for fiscal years 2016 through 2024 are publicly available on the district’s website. Budget documentation for fiscal year 2024 includes enrollment counts per school, followed by school-specific contribution details, and overall district projected expenditure information. A specific budget line details the special education tuition budget, but aside from this specific line, no other student populations are explicitly identified in the fiscal year 2024 Budget Book. The Budget Book also does not use or identify student data, such as STAR or Measures of Academic Progress assessment data, to strengthen budget requests based on students’ needs—an area for growth.

### Adequate Budget

According to the fiscal year 2024 Budget Book, funding for Wachusett comes from state sources, including Chapter 70 aid, Chapter 71 transportation reimbursement, and charter tuition reimbursement. It also includes local revenue sources, including Medicaid reimbursement, town minimum local contributions, and town assessment contributions.

According to Wachusett’s Regional Agreement, each town within the district allocates funds according to the state-determined minimum net school spending requirements plus an additional discretionary assessment contribution, which varies by town. Each town assessment is determined by student enrollment projections and additional discretionary funds, as requested by the district. According to interviews with district leaders, historically the five towns’ portion of contributions to the district were based primarily “on what municipals said they could afford . . . and [former district leaders were] bending over backwards to try to meet the towns’ demands.” Although the overall budget for each town always exceeded net spending requirements, district officials reported that this amount was still too small to maintain the district’s current level of operations.

District leaders have been working to rectify this moving forward and increase transparency by meeting monthly with each town, a strength of the district., As a result, many towns agreed to increase their annual contribution to the district well above the percentage they contributed in recent years. For example, Rutland increased their discretionary contributions by 11% via an override for fiscal year 2024. Although district leaders reported that most towns were initially hesitant to increase their funding for the district, the superintendent’s monthly meetings with each town’s officials and the finance committee board reportedly helped build trust between the stakeholders. Stakeholders across focus groups reported being pleased with the increased level of transparency and communication regarding the district’s budget. As a district leader in an interview summarized the relationship with a town, “I think the town’s trustful. I mean, we definitely will, if there’s money available, try to throw it back to the towns in the form of finding some revenue to decrease their [discretionary] assessments.” Despite the district’s request for substantially more funding from each town in the district, most stakeholders reported positive perceptions of the new district leadership and a collaborative relationship between the towns.

District leaders make requests for additional discretionary funds from each town to continue the current level of programming, reduce class sizes, and expand services as appropriate to meet the growing needs and number of students in the district. As reported in the presentation and during various interviews with district staff, district leaders proposed the following:

* Making eight class size adjustments within the district to decrease the number of students per class in accordance with the school committee Policy 3510
* Adding one EL teacher to the district to comply with DESE recommendations for EL student service times
* Adding two school counselors to decrease the counselor-to-student ratios within the district from 1 counselor for every 539 students to 1 counselor for every 440 students

According to data that the superintendent provided on counselor-to-student ratios, this proposed increase in counselors will still result in a counselor-to-student ratio that is higher than the state average of 1 counselor for every 362 students. As demonstrated by this example, the superintendent provided comparative data when making requests to the towns to provide important context and rationale for the request for increased assessment contributions. These data-driven requests, as described in the superintendent’s fiscal year 2024 Budget Presentation, are a strength of the district. According to stakeholder interviews, it reportedly resulted in increased trust and a collaborative relationship with town and community stakeholders.

### Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits

Multiple district leaders identified financial tracking and reporting as a major area for growth within Wachusett, an issue inherited from the previous district administration. At the time of the district review, which was conducted in May, the district leadership team was working to complete and finalize their end-of-year report for fiscal year 2022, originally due to DESE on September 30th. As described by a district leader,

DESE requires an end-of-year financial report. They call it their EOY report, end-of-year report, and then the Department of Revenue, or the specific Division of Local Services as a part of the Department of Revenue, requires from a regional school district [Excess and Deficiency] certification. We are literally, this sounds crazy, but we are literally days away from submitting those for fiscal year 2022. So I just have some finishing touches over the next couple of days to submit those two reports to them.

Wachusett district leaders report that they have been meeting weekly with DESE to show good faith and detail their efforts to produce this required end-of-year report. Nevertheless, completing these reporting requirements on time is an area of growth for the district.

The district is also is behind on conducting its required audits, which are supposed to be completed annually,. As explained by district leaders, Wachusett just completed their fiscal year 2021 audit, and they “don’t have audited financial statements quite yet for fiscal year 2022. But they have shared documents so that [the auditors] can start their testing” and get the results “in the next couple of weeks,” as of the district review. District leaders reported being about a month behind on this process to submit the documents necessary for the fiscal year 2022 audit, and their desire is to have this audit completed quickly to inform improvement, a self-reported area for growth in the district.

The last available audit, performed after the fiscal year 2021 school year, revealed one “significant deficiency” regarding the district’s use of financial statements. The audit advised them to “improve controls over cash reconciliation procedures.” As a result, district leaders have been working to rectify this issue with cash balances. One district leader described as follows:

We are working on finishing the fiscal year 2022 cash books. We’ve had two . . . well, three. We’ve now had three treasurers and an interim treasurer within the past year. A cash book was not kept . . .. They’ve kept us up-to-date as they find things, but, honestly, we don’t have a solid handle on our cash book right now. But they have a plan in place. We have a new treasurer, we have an assistant treasurer now, and we are hoping that our cash book will be completely up-to-date by July 1st.

Cash reconciliation procedures, as described in the fiscal year 2021 audit, continue to be an area for growth within Wachusett, with steps taken to remedy the issue.

In terms of financial tracking, the district uses Munis for both their human resources and financial tracking management system. According to district leaders, the district is working on making their digital record-keeping through Munis more robust. As one district leader explained, “We’re just starting to really build upon [the Munis system]. And where that starts is data cleanup. So we’re making sure that the data that’s in the system is accurate” and not just left over from previous years and previous administrations. Another district leader confirmed as follows:

There’s not a clear understanding of how much money is budgeted for these individual things [in Munis]. So, to be able to monitor spending in these areas, we need accounts that are funded according to budgets that are based on real expenses.

Similarly, the human resources audit found that using Munis effectively is an area of growth for the district, with staff in key roles not yet familiar with how to operate the system effectively and, as a result, it is being underutilized. This is further supported by district leaders, who described the use of Munis as, “just starting.” Furthermore, according to district leaders, updating financial records in Munis to accurately reflect spending habits and historical expense data to help them forecast spending amounts for future budget development is an area for growth in the district.

### Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

Wachusett maintains 13 school buildings across five towns, which are overseen by the district’s director of buildings and grounds and the school committee’s facilities and security subcommittee. According to district leaders, the towns own the majority of the school buildings, so facilities maintenance is a collaboration between the district and the towns. One district leader described the relationship as follows: “Since the towns own the buildings, except for two of them. If [maintenance repairs are] above $35,000, then the towns will do it, but anything under that $35,000 mark would fall under the responsibility of the district.”

As mentioned by various stakeholders across the district, with the new superintendent’s hire in July 2022, he intentionally visited each school building during the summer. On these visits, the superintendent, members of the school committee’s facilities and security subcommittee, and the principal of each building walked around the campuses and discussed each school’s unique capital improvement needs. They then compiled an updated capital improvement projects master list to address these needs in the coming school years and presented this updated list to the school committee. This process was very well received by stakeholders across the district, including teacher union representatives and school committee members, with one commenting that “the [superintendent’s] intent was very clear on wanting to make functional buildings that are safe.” This early prioritization of facility maintenance and identifying capital improvement needs is a strength of the district.

According to district leaders, the result of the visit was the realization that, “we’ll probably need a fairly substantial amount of money put towards infrastructure support.” The district was hoping to use funds from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Accelerated Repair Program; however, according to an announcement from the MSBA on January 13, 2023, the program has been put on hold and, at the time of the District Review, may not be resumed. As a result, identifying alternative financial sources to fund these infrastructure improvements is an area for growth.

One building that a variety of stakeholders identified as being in the most imminent need of repairs was the district’s Early Childhood Center in Holden, which reportedly “is the [district’s] oldest building, and it houses our early childhood center for the entire district. And it’s very sorely neglected in terms of the building itself.” Another major capital need that stakeholders mentioned was the need to account for enrollment changes, with some teachers stating that schools in their towns were at capacity, whereas others described that their enrollment had decreased significantly. District stakeholders all agreed that the infrastructure within the district was safe for the moment, but some voiced concerns about continued depreciation of older buildings across time. Overall, most stakeholders in interviews and focus groups concurred that they were pleased with the efforts by the new district administration to focus on communicating the district’s capital needs with the towns, although a reliable strategy for acquiring the money from towns to make the anticipated repairs and updates to infrastructure is yet to be determined, which is an area of growth for the district.

The district’s most recent capital needs plan, the Capital Expenditure Budget for fiscal year 2021 through fiscal year 2030, is a three-page spreadsheet that breaks down each school’s capital needs projects and provides some anticipated cost information for towns, with costs broken down by fiscal year between 2024 and 2033. According to this spreadsheet, some of the major upcoming capital plans for the district in the next decade are replacing and installing security cameras across multiple school buildings; replacing roofs across all the buildings within the district; replacing boilers and pumps across multiple school buildings; replacing curbing, sidewalks, and parking lots across a couple of school buildings; and many other building-specific capital needs projects as specified on the spreadsheet. However, given that these projects will be more than the $35,000 threshold, the district does not control whether or not the towns will allocate funds to projects. At the time of the district review, the Capital Expenditure Budget document was not publicly available on the district’s website and has not been updated under the new district administration after the summer school walkthroughs. Updating this budget is an area for growth for the district.

### Recommendations

* If not already in place, the district should provide regularly scheduled monthly or quarterly projections to the school committee that details year-to-date fiscal activity, funds remaining, as well as projected end-of-year balances.
* The district should establish and follow an annual calendar with audit and reporting deadlines, to ensure documents are submitted accurately and on time.
* The district should implement its cash-handling and cash reconciliation plan.
* The district should work with its municipalities to provide MUNIS training for district staff, so that administrators can develop more accurate financial projections and better track year-to-date expenses.
* The district should collaborate with its municipal stakeholders to first update its Capital Expenditure Budget and then identify sustainable sources of revenue to fund both urgent capital repairs and also proactively address ongoing capital issues.

## Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in Wachusett. The team conducted 121 classroom observations during the week of May 1, 2023, and held interviews and focus groups from May 1 to May 3. 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
* Support specialists
* Parents
* Students

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
* Published educational reports on the district by DESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
* District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks, school schedules, and the district’s end-of-year financial reports
* All completed program and administrator evaluations and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations

## Appendix B. Districtwide Instructional Observation Report



Wachusett Regional School District

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

May 2023



201 Jones Road  
Waltham, Massachusetts  
781-373-7000 | TTY 877.334.3499

[www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

Contents

**Page**

[Introduction 1](#_Toc92194253)

[Positive Climate 3](#_Toc92194254)

[Teacher Sensitivity 4](#_Toc92194255)

[Regard for Student Perspectives 5](#_Toc92194256)

[Negative Climate 6](#_Toc92194257)

[Behavior Management 7](#_Toc92194258)

[Productivity 8](#_Toc92194259)

[Instructional Learning Formats 9](#_Toc92194260)

[Concept Development 10](#_Toc92194261)

[Content Understanding 11](#_Toc92194262)

[Analysis and Inquiry 12](#_Toc92194263)

[Quality of Feedback 13](#_Toc92194264)

[Language Modeling 14](#_Toc92194265)

[Instructional Dialogue 15](#_Toc92194266)

[Student Engagement 16](#_Toc92194267)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K-5 17](#_Toc92194268)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6-8 18](#_Toc92194269)

[Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9-12 19](#_Toc92194270)

[References 20](#_Toc92194271)

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.

Five observers visited Wachusett during the week of May 1, 2023. Observers conducted 121 observations in a sample of classrooms across twelve schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

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

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

Table 1. CLASS K–3 Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
| * Positive Climate * Negative Climate * Teacher Sensitivity * Regard for Student Perspectives | * Behavior Management * Productivity * Instructional Learning Formats | * Concept Development * Quality of Feedback * Language Modeling |

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

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
| * Positive Climate * Teacher Sensitivity * Regard for Student Perspectives | * Behavior Management * Productivity * Negative Climate | * Instructional Learning Formats * Content Understanding * Analysis and Inquiry * Quality of Feedback * Instructional Dialogue |
| Student Engagement | | |

When conducting a visit to a classroom, the observer rates each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. For example, a rating of 1 or 2 on Teacher Sensitivity indicates that, at the time of the visit, the teacher was not aware of students who needed extra support or attention, was unresponsive to or dismissive of students, or was ineffective at addressing students’ problems; as a result, students rarely sought support from the teacher or communicated openly with the teacher. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

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

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

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

Positive Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K−12

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

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

Positive Climate District Average\*: 5.5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 5.5 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 23 | 15 | 58 | 5.8 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 36 | 5.3 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 27 | 5.1 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as:   
([2 x 2] + [3 x 6] + [4 x 15] + [5 x 30] + [6 x 41] + [7 x 27]) ÷ 121 observations = 5.5

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

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

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

Teacher Sensitivity

Emotional Support domain, Grades K−12

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

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

Teacher Sensitivity District Average\*: 5.9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 5.9 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 15 | 24 | 15 | 58 | 5.9 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 36 | 5.9 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 27 | 5.9 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as:   
([3 x 2] + [4 x 9] + [5 x 30] + [6 x 41] + [7 x 39]) ÷ 121 observations = 5.9

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\*: 4.0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 4.0 |
| Grades K-5 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 22 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 58 | 3.9 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 36 | 4.3 |
| Grades 9-12 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 3.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 3] + [2 x 18] + [3 x 26] + [4 x 35] + [5 x 18] + [6 x 14] + [7 x 7]) ÷ 121 observations = 4.0

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

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

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

Negative Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K− 3  
Classroom Organization domain, Grades 4− 12

Negative Climate reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are key to this dimension (*CLASS K–3 Manual*, p. 28, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual,* p. 55, *CLASS Secondary Manual,* p. 55). For the purposes of this report, we have inversed the observers scores, to be consistent with the range scores across all dimensions. Therefore, a high range score in this dimension indicates an absence of negative climate, and a low range score indicates the presence of negative climate.[[6]](#footnote-7)

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

Negative Climate District Average\*: 6.9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 6.9 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 54 | 58 | 6.9 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 36 | 6.9 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 27 | 7.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as:   
([6 x 7] + [7 x 114]) ÷ 121 observations = 6.9

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.

Behavior Management

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K−12

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

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

Behavior Management District Average\*: 6.6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 6.6 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 37 | 58 | 6.4 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 29 | 36 | 6.8 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 22 | 27 | 6.7 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as:   
([4 x 3] + [5 x 8] + [6 x 22] + [7 x 88]) ÷ 121 observations = 6.6

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

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

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

Productivity

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K−12

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

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

Productivity District Average\*: 6.6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 6.6 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 14 | 37 | 58 | 6.5 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 24 | 36 | 6.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 19 | 27 | 6.7 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as:   
([4 x 2] + [5 x 9] + [6 x 30] + [7 x 80]) ÷ 121 observations = 6.6

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\*: 5.1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 5.1 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 30 | 9 | 9 | 58 | 5.2 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 36 | 5.2 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 5.0 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as:   
([2 x 8] + [3 x 8] + [4 x 12] + [5 x 47] + [6 x 23] + [7 x 23]) ÷ 121 observations = 5.1

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

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

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

Concept Development

Instructional Support domain, Grades K−3

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

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

Concept Development District Average\*: 3.8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 40 | 3.8 |
| Grades K-3\*\* | 1 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 40 | 3.8 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 1] + [2 x 9] + [3 x 10] + [4 x 7] + [5 x 7] + [6 x 4] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 40 observations = 3.8

\*\*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\*: 4.7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 81 | 4.7 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 0 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 18 | 4.1 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 36 | 4.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 27 | 5.1 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as:   
([2 x 4] + [3 x 11] + [4 x 22] + [5 x 24] + [6 x 11] + [7 x 9]) ÷ 81 observations = 4.7

\*\*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\*: 3.0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 81 | 3.0 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3.1 |
| Grades 6-8 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 36 | 2.9 |
| Grades 9-12 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 2.9 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 20] + [2 x 19] + [3 x 15] + [4 x 9] + [5 x 9] + [6 x 7] + [7 x 2]) ÷ 81 observations = 3.0

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

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

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

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

Quality of Feedback

Instructional Support domain, Grades K− 12

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

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

Quality of Feedback District Average\*: 3.6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 3.6 |
| Grades K-5 | 0 | 16 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 58 | 3.7 |
| Grades 6-8 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 36 | 3.5 |
| Grades 9-12 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 27 | 3.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 8] + [2 x 30] + [3 x 31] + [4 x 12] + [5 x 20] + [6 x 13] + [7 x 7]) ÷ 121 observations = 3.6

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

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

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

Language Modeling

Instructional Support domain, Grades K− 3

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

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

Language Modeling District Average\*: 3.2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 40 | 3.2 |
| Grades K-3\*\* | 1 | 14 | 8 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 40 | 3.2 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 1] + [2 x 14] + [3 x 8] + [4 x 12] + [5 x 3] + [6 x 1] + [7 x 1]) ÷ 40 observations = 3.2

\*\*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\*: 3.4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 81 | 3.4 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 2 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3.2 |
| Grades 6-8 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 36 | 3.7 |
| Grades 9-12 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 27 | 3.1 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as:   
([1 x 18] + [2 x 17] + [3 x 13] + [4 x 6] + [5 x 14] + [6 x 3] + [7 x 10]) ÷ 81 observations = 3.4

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

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

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

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

Student Engagement

Student Engagement domain, Grades 4−12

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

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

Student Engagement District Average\*: 5.5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Band | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 81 | 5.5 |
| Grades 4-5\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 5.4 |
| Grades 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 17 | 5 | 36 | 5.6 |
| Grades 9-12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 27 | 5.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as:   
([3 x 1] + [4 x 12] + [5 x 26] + [6 x 28] + [7 x 14]) ÷ 81 observations = 5.5

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

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

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

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

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5

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

|  | Low Range | | Middle Range | | | | High Range | | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 2 | 6 | | 14 | 29 | 38 | 55 | 88 | 232 | 5.6 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 0 | | 1 | 3 | 16 | 23 | 15 | 58 | 5.8 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 54 | 58 | 6.9 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 4 | 15 | 24 | 15 | 58 | 5.9 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 2 | 6 | | 13 | 22 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 58 | 3.9 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 2 | | 2 | 11 | 40 | 36 | 83 | 174 | 6.0 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 37 | 58 | 6.4 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 2 | 5 | 14 | 37 | 58 | 6.5 |
| Instructional Learning Formats\*\*\* | 0 | 2 | | 2 | 6 | 30 | 9 | 9 | 58 | 5.2 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 7 | 49 | | 50 | 39 | 24 | 14 | 9 | 192 | 3.5 |
| Concept Development (K-3 only) | 1 | 9 | | 10 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 40 | 3.8 |
| Content Understanding (UE only) | 0 | 0 | | 6 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 18 | 4.1 |
| Analysis and Inquiry (UE only) | 3 | 4 | | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3.1 |
| Quality of Feedback | 0 | 16 | | 17 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 58 | 3.7 |
| Language Modeling (K-3 only) | 1 | 14 | | 8 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 40 | 3.2 |
| Instructional Dialogue (UE only) | 2 | 6 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3.2 |
| Student Engagement (UE only) | **0** | **0** | | **0** | **2** | **10** | **3** | **3** | **18** | **5.4** |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 1] + [4 x 3] + [5 x 16] + [6 x 23] + [7 x 15]) ÷ 58 observations = 5.8

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: ([6 x 4] + [7 x 54]) ÷ 58 observations = 6.9. In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

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

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

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

|  | Low Range | | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 0 | 7 | 7 | | 21 | 23 | 27 | 23 | 108 | 5.2 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 8 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 36 | 5.3 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 4 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 36 | 5.9 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 0 | 7 | 4 | | 9 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 36 | 4.3 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 4 | 18 | 86 | 108 | 6.8 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 1 | 6 | 29 | 36 | 6.8 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 3 | 9 | 24 | 36 | 6.6 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 36 | 6.9 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 18 | 34 | 29 | | 19 | 33 | 24 | 23 | 180 | 4.0 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 0 | 4 | 4 | | 3 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 36 | 5.2 |
| Content Understanding | 0 | 4 | 3 | | 10 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 36 | 4.6 |
| Analysis and Inquiry | 10 | 9 | 4 | | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 36 | 2.9 |
| Quality of Feedback | 3 | 9 | 9 | | 2 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 36 | 3.5 |
| Instructional Dialogue | 5 | 8 | 9 | | 0 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 36 | 3.7 |
| Student Engagement | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 7 | 7 | 17 | 5 | 36 | 5.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([3 x 2] + [4 x 8] + [5 x 10] + [6 x 10] + [7 x 6]) ÷ 36 observations = 5.3

\*\*Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: ([6 x 3] + [7 x 33]) ÷ 36 observations = 6.9

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

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

|  | Low Range | | | Middle Range | | | High Range | | n | Average Scores\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional Support Domain | 1 | 7 | 13 | | 9 | 17 | 18 | 16 | 81 | 4.9 |
| Positive Climate | 0 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 27 | 5.1 |
| Teacher Sensitivity | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 1 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 27 | 5.9 |
| Regard for Student Perspectives | 1 | 5 | 9 | | 4 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 3.6 |
| Classroom Organization Domain | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 3 | 10 | 68 | 81 | 6.8 |
| Behavior Management | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 2 | 3 | 22 | 27 | 6.7 |
| Productivity | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 1 | 7 | 19 | 27 | 6.7 |
| Negative Climate\*\* | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 27 | 7.0 |
| Instructional Support Domain | 23 | 16 | 15 | | 16 | 37 | 15 | 13 | 135 | 3.9 |
| Instructional Learning Formats | 0 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 5.0 |
| Content Understanding | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 5 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 27 | 5.1 |
| Analysis and Inquiry | 7 | 6 | 5 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 2.9 |
| Quality of Feedback | 5 | 5 | 5 | | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 27 | 3.6 |
| Instructional Dialogue | 11 | 3 | 1 | | 3 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 27 | 3.1 |
| Student Engagement | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 3 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 27 | 5.6 |

\*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: ([2 x 2] + [3 x 3] + [4 x 4] + [5 x 4] + [6 x 8] + [7 x 6]) ÷ 27 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 x 27]) ÷ 27 observations = 7.0

References

Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). *Measuring and improving teacher-student interactions in PK−12 settings to enhance students’ learning*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia. Retrieved from <http://www.teachstone.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/class-mtp-pk-12-brief.pdf>

MET Project. (2010). *The CLASS protocol for classroom observations*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from <http://metproject.org/resources/CLASS_10_29_10.pdf>

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Secondary.* Charlottesville, VA:Teachstone.

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Upper Elementary.* Charlottesville, VA:Teachstone.

Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, K–3.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

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

Table C1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| [*Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting (SBB)*](https://www.erstrategies.org/cms/files/2752-student-based-budgeting-guide.pdf),%20from%20Education%20Resource%20Strategies) from Education Resource Strategies | This guide describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs. |
| [Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/principal.html) | 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. |
| [Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/coherence-guidebook.pdf) | The guidebook 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. |

Table C2. Resources to Support Curriculum and Instruction

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| [Curriculum Matters MA](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/impd/default.html) Webpage | A suite of resources to support the use of high-quality curriculum, including [*IMplement MA*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/rlo/instruction/implement-ma-process/story.html), our recommended four-phase process to prepare for, select, launch, and implement new high-quality instructional materials with key tasks and action steps. Also includes [*CURATE*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/default.html), which convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate evidence on the quality and alignment of specific curricular materials and then publishes their findings for educators across the Commonwealth to consult. |
| [MA Curriculum Frameworks Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/) | Some of the most frequently used resources include “[What to Look For”](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/) classroom observation guides; the [Family Guides](https://www.doe.mass.edu/highstandards/default.html) help families understand what students are expected to know and do by the end of each grade; and the Standards Navigator tool and app, which can be used to explore the standards, see how they are connected to other standards, related student work samples, reference guides, and definitions. |
| [Mass Literacy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/) Guide | An interactive site with research, information, and resources on evidence-based practices for early literacy that are culturally responsive and sustaining. There is current information on complex text, fluent word reading, language comprehension, students experiencing reading difficulties, equity in literacy, how to support an MTSS for ELA/literacy, and much more. |
| [Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/coherence-guidebook.pdf) | The guidebook 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. |

Table C3. Resources to Support Assessment

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| DESE’s [District Data Team Toolkit](http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/toolkit/) | A set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a district data team. |

Table C4. Resources to Support Human Resources and Professional Development

| Resource | Description |
| --- | --- |
| [Educator Evaluation Implementation Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/implementation/default.html) | A suite of resources and practical tools that reflect feedback from educators on how to implement educator evaluation in support of more equitable, culturally responsive schools and classrooms for all. These resources include Focus Indicators, a subset of Indicators from the Classroom Teacher and School Level Administrator Rubrics that represent high-priority practices for the 2022-23 school year. |
| [Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/talent-guide/default.html) | Resources, considerations, and updates for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on racial equity. |
| [Professional Learning Partner Guide](https://plpartnerguide.org/) | 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 PD providers to support the launch or implementation of high-quality instructional materials. |

Table C5. Resources to Support Student Support

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| [Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS) Framework and Self-Reflection Tool](http://sassma.org/) | Based on [Five Essential Elements](http://sassma.org/essentialelements.asp), these resources (see [At-a-Glance overview](http://sassma.org/SaSSFrameworkAndSRT.docx)) can help guide school- and district-based teams in creating safer and more supportive school climates and cultures. Through a phased process (with preliminary and deeper dive self-reflection options) teams can create plans based on local context and data, and through examination of [six areas](http://sassma.org/levers.asp) of school operation. |
| [MTSS Blueprint](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/) | This MTSS resource offers a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that all students receive a high-quality educational experience. |
| [Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement Framework for Massachusetts](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf) | This resource offers a roadmap for practitioners and families in health, human services, and education. A companion document is the [Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals Self-Assessment Version 2.0](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/fscp-fundamentals.docx). |
| State and local student survey data such as [Views of Climate and L](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/vocal)earning and [Youth Risk Behavior S](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/yrbs/)urvey | State and local student survey data can provide information about student experiences, strengths, and needs. They also can help prompt additional local inquiry through focus groups, advisories, and ongoing communication with students, families, staff, and partners to inform continuous improvement efforts. |

Table C6. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Resource | Description |
| [*Spending Money Wisely: Getting the Most From School District* *Budgets*](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3412255/Spending-Money-Wisely-Getting-the-Most-from-School-District-Budgets-e-book.pdf) (scroll down to Research section) | A discussion of the top 10 opportunities for districts to realign resources and free up funds to support strategic priorities. |
| [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/radar/) | RADAR is a suite of innovative data reports, case studies, and other resources that provide a new approach to resource decisions. |
| [Planning for Success (PfS)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/) | An inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support. |
| [DESE spending comparisons website](https://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/default.html) | A clearinghouse of school finance data reports and other resources available to district users and the public. |

## Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table D1. Wachusett Regional School District: Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2022-2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | District | Percentage of total | State | Percentage of total |
| All | 6,739 | 100.0% | 913,735 | 100.0% |
| African American | 212 | 3.1% | 85,662 | 9.4% |
| Asian | 199 | 3.0% | 67,010 | 7.3% |
| Hispanic | 516 | 7.7% | 221,044 | 24.2% |
| Native American | 7 | 0.1% | 2,155 | 0.2% |
| White | 5,613 | 83.3% | 496,800 | 54.4% |
| Native Hawaiian | 4 | 0.1% | 787 | 0.1% |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic | 188 | 2.8% | 40,277 | 4.4% |

*Note*. As of October 1, 2022.

Table D2. Wachusett Regional School District: Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations, 2022-2023

|  | District | | | State | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* | Percentage of high needs | Percentage of district | *N* | Percentage of high needs | Percentage of state |
| All students with high needs | 1,987 | 100.0% | 29.1% | 508,820 | 100.0% | 55.1% |
| Students with disabilities | 998 | 50.2% | 14.6% | 179,095 | 35.2% | 19.4% |
| Low-income households | 1,088 | 54.8% | 16.1% | 386,060 | 75.9% | 42.3% |
| ELs and former ELs | 131 | 6.6% | 1.9% | 110,554 | 21.7% | 12.1% |

*Note*. As of October 1, 2022. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 6,836; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 923,349.

Table D3. Wachusett Regional School District: Chronic Absencea Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 6,950 | 8.2 | 16.2 | 17.1 | 27.7 |
| African American/Black | 201 | 4.6 | 13.1 | 16.9 | 32.0 |
| Asian | 204 | 7.7 | 10.1 | 11.8 | 15.4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 507 | 13.0 | 23.8 | 22.1 | 42.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 189 | 5.9 | 15.7 | 16.4 | 28.4 |
| Native American | 11 | 11.1 | 22.2 | 18.2 | 37.8 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 4 | — | — | — | 32.1 |
| White | 5,834 | 8.1 | 15.9 | 16.9 | 22.1 |
| High needs | 2,210 | 13.5 | 25.0 | 26.3 | 37.1 |
| Low incomeb | 1,364 | — | — | 30.9 | 40.6 |
| ELs | 150 | 9.9 | 10.0 | 22.7 | 39.9 |
| Students w/disabilities | 1,034 | 15.7 | 27.0 | 25.0 | 36.9 |

a The percentage of students absent 10 percent or more of their total number of student days of membership in a school. b Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table D4. Wachusett Regional School District: Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending, Fiscal Years 2020-2022

|  | Fiscal Year 2020 | | Fiscal Year 2021 | | Fiscal Year 2022 | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual | Estimated | Actual |
| Expenditures | | | | | | |
| From local appropriations for schools |  | | | | | |
| By school committee | 96,570,650 | 96,759,814 | 102,115,384 | 99,333,872 | 104,553,279 | — |
| From revolving funds and grants | — | 6,394,706 | — | 8,675,232 | — | — |
| Total expenditures | — | 103,154,520 | — | 108,009,104 | — | — |
| Chapter 70 aid to education program | | | | | | |
| Chapter 70 state aida | — | 28,647,835 | — | 29,560,178 | — | 29,762,018 |
| Required local contribution | — | 42,635,066 | — | 44,374,979 | — | 45,202,423 |
| Required net school spendingb | — | 71,282,901 | — | 73,935,157 | — | 74,964,441 |
| Actual net school spending | — | 87,999,924 | — | 91,337,395 | — | 95,087,530 |
| Over/under required ($) | — | 16,717,023 | — | 17,402,238 | — | 20,123,089 |
| Over/under required (%) | — | 23.5% | — | 23.5% | — | 26.8% |

*Note*. Data as of June 2, 2023, and sourced from fiscal year 2022 district end-of-year reports and Chapter 70 program information on DESE website.

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

Table D5. Wachusett Regional School District: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Expenditure category | 2020 | 2021 | 2022\* |
| Administration | $312 | $488 | $0 |
| Instructional leadership (district and school) | $774 | $838 | $0 |
| Teachers | $5,340 | $5,863 | $0 |
| Other teaching services | $1,353 | $1,543 | $0 |
| Professional development | $135 | $63 | $0 |
| Instructional materials, equipment, and technology | $199 | $664 | $0 |
| Guidance, counseling, and testing services | $335 | $347 | $0 |
| Pupil services | $1,236 | $1,240 | $0 |
| Operations and maintenance | $987 | $1,098 | $0 |
| Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs | $2,342 | $2,609 | $0 |
| Total expenditures per in-district pupil | $13,013 | $14,753 | $0 |

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

\* At the time this report was finalized, Wachusett had not yet submitted expenditures per in-district pupil to DESE. For that reason, these data are not included.

## Appendix E. Student Performance Data

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. Data reported in this appendix may have been affected by the pandemic. Please keep this in mind when reviewing the data and take particular care when comparing data across multiple school years.

Table E1. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 3,189 | 67 | 57 | 52 | 41 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 17 |
| African American/Black | 109 | 60 | 56 | 47 | 26 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 27 |
| Asian | 92 | 80 | 70 | 64 | 63 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 222 | 58 | 44 | 39 | 22 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 31 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 81 | 70 | 58 | 60 | 48 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 14 |
| Native American | 7 | — | — | — | 29 | — | — | — | 25 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 2 | — | — | — | 43 | — | — | — | 17 |
| White | 2,674 | 67 | 57 | 52 | 48 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 11 |
| High needs | 1,060 | 37 | 36 | 31 | 24 | 16 | 18 | 18 | 28 |
| Low incomea | 633 | — | — | 35 | 24 | — | — | 14 | 28 |
| ELs and former ELs | 197 | 58 | 46 | 37 | 20 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 34 |
| Students w/disabilities | 457 | 20 | 22 | 16 | 11 | 27 | 30 | 34 | 46 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E2. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 492 | 81 | 81 | 70 | 58 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| African American/Black | 8 | 67 | 69 | — | 41 | 8 | 0 | — | 13 |
| Asian | 14 | 100 | 95 | 79 | 79 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 30 | 83 | 71 | 57 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 17 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 11 | — | 100 | 73 | 62 | — | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 53 | — | — | — | 8 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 45 | — | — | — | 16 |
| White | 428 | 80 | 80 | 71 | 65 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| High needs | 150 | 48 | 44 | 39 | 38 | 14 | 19 | 14 | 15 |
| Low incomea | 87 | — | — | 48 | 40 | — | — | 15 | 14 |
| ELs and former ELs | 13 | — | — | 31 | 21 | — | — | 23 | 30 |
| Students w/disabilities | 89 | 35 | 23 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 33 | 19 | 26 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E3. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 3,184 | 64 | 42 | 51 | 39 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| African American/Black | 109 | 56 | 34 | 35 | 19 | 4 | 9 | 9 | 31 |
| Asian | 92 | 81 | 63 | 72 | 69 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 222 | 54 | 31 | 37 | 18 | 4 | 18 | 12 | 32 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 81 | 65 | 40 | 53 | 44 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| Native American | 7 | — | — | — | 27 | — | — | — | 23 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 2 | — | — | — | 39 | — | — | — | 19 |
| White | 2,669 | 64 | 43 | 53 | 47 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 11 |
| High needs | 1,060 | 36 | 23 | 30 | 22 | 15 | 24 | 17 | 28 |
| Low incomea | 634 | — | — | 31 | 20 | — | — | 15 | 29 |
| ELs and former ELs | 198 | 58 | 36 | 39 | 21 | 8 | 17 | 12 | 32 |
| Students w/disabilities | 455 | 21 | 14 | 18 | 12 | 26 | 36 | 31 | 45 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E4. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 485 | 78 | 74 | 65 | 50 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 10 |
| African American/Black | 8 | 50 | 54 | — | 26 | 8 | 0 | — | 20 |
| Asian | 14 | 85 | 89 | 79 | 78 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 29 | 66 | 52 | 55 | 26 | 0 | 10 | 14 | 21 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 11 | — | 93 | 82 | 53 | — | 0 | 9 | 10 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 37 | — | — | — | 16 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 48 | — | — | — | 19 |
| White | 422 | 79 | 74 | 66 | 59 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| High needs | 147 | 38 | 33 | 32 | 28 | 16 | 21 | 20 | 19 |
| Low incomea | 84 | — | — | 42 | 29 | — | — | 17 | 19 |
| ELs and former ELs | 13 | — | — | 38 | 17 | — | — | 38 | 32 |
| Students w/disabilities | 88 | 19 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 24 | 35 | 28 | 33 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E5. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grades 5 and 8, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 1,090 | 67 | 55 | 58 | 42 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 18 |
| African American/Black | 38 | 52 | 54 | 45 | 21 | 3 | 4 | 16 | 31 |
| Asian | 32 | 86 | 77 | 78 | 65 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 8 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 80 | 48 | 31 | 49 | 20 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 33 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 37 | 69 | 61 | 59 | 48 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 15 |
| Native American | 3 | — | — | — | 28 | — | — | — | 25 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 1 | — | — | — | 41 | — | — | — | 20 |
| White | 899 | 68 | 55 | 58 | 52 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 10 |
| High needs | 384 | 36 | 35 | 36 | 24 | 16 | 18 | 16 | 29 |
| Low incomea | 233 | — | — | 39 | 23 | — | — | 15 | 30 |
| ELs and former ELs | 71 | 59 | 39 | 41 | 18 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 37 |
| Students w/disabilities | 165 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 15 | 27 | 27 | 28 | 44 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E6. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2019-2022

| Group | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All | 463 | — | — | 44 | 47 | — | — | 4 | 14 |
| African American/Black | 5 | — | — | — | 25 | — | — | — | 25 |
| Asian | 14 | — | — | 57 | 70 | — | — | 7 | 6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 23 | — | — | 35 | 23 | — | — | 13 | 28 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 10 | — | — | 30 | 51 | — | — | 0 | 12 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 38 | — | — | — | 14 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 45 | — | — | — | 23 |
| White | 410 | — | — | 45 | 56 | — | — | 3 | 8 |
| High needs | 131 | — | — | 17 | 26 | — | — | 13 | 24 |
| Low incomea | 72 | — | — | 24 | 26 | — | — | 11 | 25 |
| ELs and former ELs | 9 | — | — | — | 13 | — | — | — | 43 |
| Students w/disabilities | 80 | — | — | 9 | 16 | — | — | 18 | 37 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E7. Wachusett Regional School District: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grades 3-8, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 2,434 | 50.4 | 52.3 | 49.8 |
| African American/Black | 65 | 51.8 | 55.0 | 48.8 |
| Asian | 72 | 55.7 | 58.2 | 58.5 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 166 | 48.3 | 52.9 | 46.5 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 70 | 50.0 | 52.6 | 51.5 |
| Native American | 5 | — | — | 46.2 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 1 | — | — | 51.7 |
| White | 2,055 | 50.3 | 51.9 | 50.0 |
| High needs | 778 | 45.0 | 49.2 | 46.7 |
| Low incomea | 476 | — | 50.3 | 46.5 |
| ELs and former ELs | 126 | 51.6 | 52.3 | 47.7 |
| Students w/disabilities | 323 | 41.7 | 45.6 | 41.8 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E8. Wachusett Regional School District: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grade 10, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 458 | 53.1 | 42.5 | 50.0 |
| African American/Black | 7 | — | — | 49.8 |
| Asian | 14 | — | — | 56.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 23 | 47.0 | 47.2 | 47.6 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 11 | — | — | 50.6 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | 54.1 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 49.5 |
| White | 402 | 52.8 | 41.5 | 50.1 |
| High needs | 134 | 42.7 | 44.1 | 47.7 |
| Low incomea | 76 | — | 43.7 | 47.2 |
| ELs and former ELs | 10 | — | — | 50.5 |
| Students w/disabilities | 78 | 43.0 | 40.6 | 45.1 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E9. Wachusett Regional School District: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grades 3-8, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 2,426 | 50.1 | 55.0 | 49.9 |
| African American/Black | 65 | 49.5 | 56.0 | 47.0 |
| Asian | 72 | 48.2 | 55.9 | 59.8 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 164 | 52.2 | 53.6 | 46.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 70 | 51.9 | 51.1 | 51.0 |
| Native American | 5 | — | — | 49.5 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 1 | — | — | 49.9 |
| White | 2,049 | 50.1 | 55.2 | 50.4 |
| High needs | 773 | 48.3 | 51.8 | 47.1 |
| Low incomea | 476 | — | 51.6 | 46.4 |
| ELs and former ELs | 124 | 52.8 | 58.0 | 48.6 |
| Students w/disabilities | 319 | 46.5 | 48.9 | 43.3 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E10. Wachusett Regional School District: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grade 10, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 450 | 57.2 | 51.0 | 50.0 |
| African American/Black | 7 | — | — | 45.6 |
| Asian | 14 | — | — | 57.3 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 22 | 58.8 | 48.4 | 44.4 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 10 | — | — | 50.0 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | 46.6 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | 41.2 |
| White | 396 | 56.5 | 51.2 | 51.6 |
| High needs | 130 | 48.3 | 50.2 | 46.7 |
| Low incomea | 73 | — | 52.8 | 45.6 |
| ELs and former ELs | 10 | — | — | 48.9 |
| Students w/disabilities | 76 | 45.6 | 46.1 | 47.3 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E11. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS ELA Achievement by Grade, 2019‑2022

| Grade | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| 3 | 513 | 72 | 65 | 54 | 44 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 15 |
| 4 | 484 | 64 | 61 | 49 | 38 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 16 |
| 5 | 549 | 58 | 58 | 47 | 41 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 13 |
| 6 | 556 | 74 | 60 | 61 | 41 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 22 |
| 7 | 540 | 62 | 47 | 51 | 41 | 5 | 11 | 8 | 19 |
| 8 | 547 | 73 | 52 | 49 | 42 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 18 |
| 3-8 | 3,189 | 67 | 57 | 52 | 41 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 17 |
| 10 | 492 | 81 | 81 | 70 | 58 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

Table E12. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Grade, 2019-2022

| Grade | *N* (2022) | Percentages meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| 3 | 513 | 62 | 35 | 45 | 41 | 6 | 13 | 10 | 20 |
| 4 | 481 | 61 | 41 | 51 | 42 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 17 |
| 5 | 547 | 63 | 48 | 54 | 36 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 16 |
| 6 | 555 | 75 | 50 | 61 | 42 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 15 |
| 7 | 541 | 62 | 45 | 51 | 37 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 19 |
| 8 | 547 | 62 | 35 | 46 | 36 | 5 | 13 | 9 | 17 |
| 3-8 | 3,184 | 64 | 42 | 51 | 39 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| 10 | 485 | 78 | 74 | 65 | 50 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 10 |

Table E13. Wachusett Regional School District: Next-Generation MCAS Science Achievement by Grade, 2019‑2022

| Grade | *N* (2022) | Percentage meeting or exceeding expectations | | | | Percentage not meeting expectations | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) | 2019 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| 5 | 545 | 63 | 54 | 58 | 43 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 18 |
| 8 | 545 | 72 | 55 | 57 | 42 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 18 |
| 5 and 8 | 1,090 | 67 | 55 | 58 | 42 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 18 |
| 10 | 463 | — | — | 44 | 47 | — | — | 4 | 14 |

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

Table E14. Wachusett Regional School District: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | *N (*2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| 3 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 | 433 | 53.5 | 50.1 | 50.0 |
| 5 | 499 | 45.3 | 50.0 | 49.9 |
| 6 | 511 | 59.3 | 58.3 | 49.8 |
| 7 | 500 | 47.5 | 51.3 | 49.7 |
| 8 | 491 | 46.7 | 51.2 | 49.7 |
| 3-8 | 2,434 | 50.4 | 52.3 | 49.8 |
| 10 | 458 | 53.1 | 42.5 | 50.0 |

Table E15. Wachusett Regional School District: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2019 and 2022

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | *N* (2022) | 2019 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| 3 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 | 429 | 48.6 | 55.9 | 50.0 |
| 5 | 496 | 58.9 | 60.7 | 50.0 |
| 6 | 511 | 58.6 | 58.4 | 49.8 |
| 7 | 502 | 43.1 | 51.8 | 49.9 |
| 8 | 488 | 41.8 | 48.2 | 49.8 |
| 3-8 | 2,426 | 50.1 | 55.0 | 49.9 |
| 10 | 450 | 57.2 | 51.0 | 50.0 |

Table E16. Wachusett Regional School District: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2020‑2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 491 | 95.1 | 94.4 | 93.5 | 90.1 |
| African American/Black | 8 | 100 | 90.0 | 100 | 86.2 |
| Asian | 14 | 100 | 95.5 | 100 | 96.2 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 29 | 91.3 | 100 | 93.1 | 81.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 8 | 100 | 88.9 | 100 | 88.7 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | — | 82.2 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 81.3 |
| White | 430 | 95.1 | 94.2 | 93.0 | 93.2 |
| High needs | 155 | 86.7 | 86.4 | 82.6 | 83.9 |
| Low incomea | 110 | 86.8 | 87.6 | 85.5 | 83.2 |
| ELs | — | 100 | — | — | 73.1 |
| Students w/disabilities | 76 | 79.0 | 75.9 | 68.4 | 78.0 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E17. Wachusett Regional School District: Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2019‑2021

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2021) | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | State (2021) |
| All students | 520 | 96.8 | 95.5 | 95.2 | 91.8 |
| African American/Black | 10 | 100 | 100 | 90.0 | 88.1 |
| Asian | 22 | 95.5 | 100 | 100 | 97.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 26 | 95.8 | 91.3 | 100 | 84.0 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 9 | — | 100 | 88.9 | 91.2 |
| Native American | 1 | — | — | — | 84.1 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 87.7 |
| White | 452 | 96.9 | 95.4 | 94.9 | 94.4 |
| High needs | 162 | 90.7 | 88.0 | 87.7 | 85.8 |
| Low incomea | 121 | 92.0 | 88.7 | 89.3 | 85.1 |
| ELs | 5 | — | 100 | — | 78.0 |
| Students w/disabilities | 87 | 87.1 | 80.2 | 78.2 | 80.6 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E18. Wachusett Regional School District: In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 6,930 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.7 | 1.6 |
| African American/Black | 201 | — | — | — | 2.2 |
| Asian | 204 | — | — | — | 0.4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 507 | — | — | 1.2 | 2.1 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 185 | — | — | — | 1.8 |
| Native American | 11 | — | — | — | 2.4 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 4 | — | — | — | 1.9 |
| White | 5,818 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.7 | 1.4 |
| High needs | 2,205 | 0.5 | — | 1.5 | 2.2 |
| Low incomea | 1,354 | — | — | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| ELs | 153 | — | — | — | 1.4 |
| Students w/disabilities | 1,038 | 0.7 | — | 1.3 | 2.8 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E19. Wachusett Regional School District: Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2020‑2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 6,930 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 1.1 | 3.1 |
| African American/Black | 201 | — | — | — | 6.2 |
| Asian | 204 | — | — | — | 0.7 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 507 | — | — | 1.8 | 4.9 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 185 | — | — | — | 3.5 |
| Native American | 11 | — | — | — | 4.3 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | 4 | — | — | — | 3.6 |
| White | 5,818 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 2.1 |
| High needs | 2,205 | 1.1 | — | 2.0 | 4.6 |
| Low incomea | 1,354 | — | — | 2.1 | 5.2 |
| ELs | 153 | — | — | — | 3.5 |
| Students w/disabilities | 1,038 | 1.5 | — | 3.0 | 5.8 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E20. Wachusett Regional School District: Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 1,946 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 2.1 |
| African American/Black | 39 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.6 | 2.8 |
| Asian | 72 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 115 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.5 | 4.3 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 44 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | — | 4.3 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 1.2 |
| White | 1,674 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 1.3 |
| High needs | 473 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| Low incomea | 305 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 3.3 | 3.8 |
| ELs | 9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 7.8 |
| Students w/disabilities | 233 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 5,2 | 3.4 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E21. Wachusett Regional School District: Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | *N* (2022) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | State (2022) |
| All students | 972 | 65.4 | 66.9 | 63.2 | 64.9 |
| African American/Black | 18 | 57.1 | 47.4 | 38.9 | 55.5 |
| Asian | 35 | 76.5 | 88.9 | 77.1 | 84.9 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 57 | 52.8 | 55.4 | 49.1 | 49.2 |
| Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino | 22 | 86.4 | 76.5 | 72.7 | 66.1 |
| Native American | 2 | — | — | — | 50.0 |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | — | — | — | — | 65.4 |
| White | 838 | 65.3 | 66.9 | 63.7 | 69.5 |
| High needs | 235 | 38.6 | 39.0 | 34.5 | 49.1 |
| Low incomea | 158 | 39.2 | 47.2 | 38.6 | 50.1 |
| ELs | 3 | — | — | — | 30.0 |
| Students w/disabilities | 116 | 29.2 | 21.1 | 19.0 | 34.3 |

a Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low-income student group](https://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/redefining-lowincome.html). This change also affects the high needs group.

1. DESE’s District Standards and Indicators are at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/district-standards-indicators.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For more information on the Teachstone CLASS protocol, visit <https://teachstone.com/class/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Average SGP ranges: Very Low Growth = 1.0—29.9, Low Growth = 30.0—39.9, Typical Growth = 40.0—59.9, High Growth = 60.0 or higher. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. CURATE: CUrriculum RAtings by TEachers. See <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Due to the small number of 11th and 12th grade English learners in Wachusett, enrollment in advanced coursework is not reported on. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)