

Norwood Public Schools

Comprehensive District Review Report

February 2023

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of District Reviews and Monitoring

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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
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Executive Summary

In accordance with Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct a comprehensive review of Norwood Public Schools (hereafter, Norwood) in February 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

Leadership and Governance

Norwood's leader is David Thomson, who was appointed superintendent in July 2017. He receives support from an assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; a chief of staff; and directors of strategic initiatives, finance and operations, student support services, technology, and athletics. These district officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Norwood residents through their oversight of the district. The school committee has five members, each serving a three-year term. The district's strategic plan and school improvement plans guide the school committee's agenda. The main findings from a recently completed equity audit were incorporated into the strategic plan and directly inform district and school improvement planning. The equity audit offered opportunities for the district to develop strategies to intentionally close access, opportunity, and achievement gaps. Strengths for the district include collaboration between district leaders and school committee, regular meetings between school committee and the student advisory council, collaboration between district and school leaders, alignment between the strategic plan and a recently completed equity audit, and school leader autonomy in budget development. Areas for growth for the district include collaboration with municipal leaders to support long-term planning, perceived visibility of central office leaders in schools from teaching staff, outreach to families and staff to meaningfully leverage school councils, and cost effectiveness of programs, initiatives, and activities designed to improve student outcomes.

Curriculum and Instruction

Updating curricular materials to ensure alignment with Massachusetts curricular frameworks was a major focus for Norwood in recent years. Funding from an override passed by the Town of Norwood in 2019 supported these changes. Since 2019, the district has adopted new curricula and assessments for elementary ELA and mathematics, as well as a new elementary science curriculum. The district's elementary ELA and mathematics curricula are both rated as meeting expectations according to CURATE. Feedback from district leaders and documents reviewed indicate an intent to continue regular reviews of instructional materials for quality and alignment to standards. The district developed a checklist to guide the review of curricula, as well as a protocol to ensure that all materials comply with Office for Civil Rights requirements. Strengths of the district include the

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

recently refreshed curricular materials made possible by override funding, mathematics achievement for students in grades 3 through 8, district capacity to support the implementation and alignment of curricular materials at the elementary level, expanded secondary pathway options, and reduced barriers advanced coursework. Areas for growth for the district include documented curricular review processes, access to non-evaluative coaching across school levels to support differentiation, curricular representation of diverse cultures, experiences, needs, and interests, and implementation and effectiveness of instructional strategies and structures to support students with disabilities.

Three observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Norwood during the week of February 13, 2023. The observers conducted 89 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 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, for the K-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest mixed evidence of emotional support, classroom organization, student engagement (Grades 4-5), and rigorous instructional support. For the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of emotional support, classroom organization, student engagement, and rigorous instructional support. For the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of emotional support, classroom organization, student engagement, and rigorous instructional support.

Assessment

According to the district's 2022-2023 assessment inventory, the district administers academic assessments, including Star Reading and Math assessments from Renaissance Learning, regularly and routinely for Grades K-12. In addition, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills measures student progress twice per year for Grades K-2. The district uses the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten upon entering school. Teachers, parents, and students each have access to Aspen, the district's student information system, which houses information such as grades and attendance. District staff also have access to Renaissance to view student performance data, but these results are neither available in Aspen nor regularly communicated to parents or students. Strengths for the district include alignment between ELA and mathematics assessments for grades K-12, collaboration between school leaders and curriculum coordinators to use assessment data to improve instruction at the school and classroom levels, and educators' access to data to support classroom-level decision making. Areas for growth include formal opportunities for teachers' participation in assessment implementation planning, inclusion of measures related to student well-being, structures to support regular review of student assessment data by the district leadership team, alignment of structures and supports for the use of data within grade and/or department team meetings across all schools, and structures and supports for sharing student assessment data with families and students in meaningful ways.

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

Human Resources and Professional Development

The Town of Norwood manages most human resources procedures and processes for the district. School leaders have autonomy to manage staffing needs and hiring procedures within their schools, allowing direct involvement by principals in the hiring of their own staff. However, school leaders and district administrators expressed a desire for increased internal capacity related to human resources to provide more streamlined support and expertise in legal policies and procedures. The district currently is integrating culturally responsive and sustaining practices into all aspects of education. Through training with the Highlander program, teachers have engaged with professional development focused on building tools to incorporate culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices in their classrooms. Strengths for the district include school leaders' autonomy in hiring, district monitoring of licensure compliance across teaching positions, and the integration of culturally responsive and sustaining practices in all schools. Areas for growth for the district include the development and implementation of efficient human resources policies, procedures, and practices, systems and structures to sustainably recruit, hire, and retain a diverse workforce, structures to support professional development on a variety of important topics, and opportunities for growth through leadership development and advancement.

Student Support

Norwood student support initiatives vary by school. The district prioritized funding to include building-based academic interventionists in each school. Currently, formal social-emotional learning programs are in place for students in preschool, kindergarten, and middle school, and the district recently selected a program for implementation next year in Grades 1-5. Each school has a multidisciplinary team that meets to review student data and develop targeted and/or intensive supports as needed. Each school has an active school council that comprises school leaders, faculty, parents, and community members who meet regularly. Student leadership opportunities are available through various programs primarily at the middle and high school levels. Strengths for the district include the prioritization of safe, supportive, equitable, and inclusive environments, the use of multidisciplinary teams in each school to align supports and interventions, district funded interventionists in each school, the recent adoption of a social-emotional learning curriculum to be implemented in grades 1-5, a partnership with McLean Hospital supports staff in developing individualized plans for students with intensive needs, and the use of Parent Square to streamline communications from the district. Areas for growth include consistent and equitable approaches for handling inappropriate behavior across school settings, alignment in practices and expectations for multidisciplinary teams, interventions, and progress monitoring across all schools, clear structures to evaluate tiered systems of support at the school and district levels, and engagement of families that increases participation in planning and decision making at the school and district levels.

Financial and Asset Management

Town and district leaders collaborate throughout the budget development process to ensure that allocation and use of funding and other resources improve students' performance, opportunities, and outcomes. Funding from the state recently increased in response to growth among high needs student populations. In addition, funds from an override passed by the Town of Norwood in 2019

have been used to support various district initiatives. Although funding provided by the town regularly exceeds net school spending requirements, district and town leaders noted room for improvement in longer term budget considerations, and they highlighted room for improvement in structures to support collaboration and budgetary planning. Historically, the district had internal staff dedicated to facilities and operations, but after restructuring, these positions are now organized within the Town of Norwood. Town officials described cost savings and efficiencies from this restructuring. The town's capital plan includes improvement projects related to district facilities. In addition, district staff maintain separate plans related to capital improvement planning related to district transportation and technology needs. Strengths of the district include additional staff to ensure accurate budget documentation and reporting, sufficient general appropriation funds provided by the community to meet required net school spending, increased internal controls and capacity through the budget office, and the effective use of funding to support capital planning and facility maintenance through collaboration with the town. Areas for growth for the district include alignment between budget documentation and strategic plan initiatives, a long-term strategy for addressing potential changes and/or shortfalls within the budget, and student transportation cost efficiencies.

Norwood Public Schools: 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. In addition, 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 Norwood was conducted during the week of February 13, 2023. The site visit included 18 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 99 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted four teacher focus groups with 12 elementary school teachers, five middle school teachers, and six high school teachers. In addition, focus groups were conducted with five middle school students, six high school students, and more than 25 family members.

The site team also conducted 89 observations of classroom instruction in eight schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

District Profile

Norwood’s leader is David Thomson, who was appointed superintendent in 2017. He receives support from an assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; a chief of staff; and directors of strategic initiatives, finance and operations, student support services, technology, and athletics. The district is governed by a school committee composed of five members who are elected for three-year terms.

In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 305 teachers in the district, with 3,486 students enrolled in the district’s eight 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
George F. Willett Early Childhood Center	Early Childhood	PK-K	402
C.J. Prescott Elementary School	Elementary	K-5	243
Thomas Balch Elementary School	Elementary	1-5	312
C.M. Callahan Elementary School	Elementary	1-5	224
F.A. Cleveland Elementary School	Elementary	1-5	313
John P. Oldham Elementary School	Elementary	1-5	275
Dr. Philip O. Coakley Middle School	Middle	6-8	776
Norwood High School	High	9-12	941
Total			3,486

Note. Enrollment data as of October 1, 2022.

Between 2020 and 2023, overall student enrollment decreased by four students. 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 greater than the median in-district per-pupil expenditure for K-12 districts of similar size in fiscal year 2021—\$18,901.33 for Norwood compared with \$16,983.55 for similar districts—and greater than average state spending per pupil (\$18,518.66). 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.

School and Student Performance

In ELA in Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 14 percentage points from 52 percent in 2019 to 38 percent in 2022, which was below the 2022 state rate of 41 percent. In Grade 10, the percentage of students

scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations declined by 1 percentage point, from 64 percent in 2019 to 63 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 58 percent (see Tables E1 and E2).

- In Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 3 percentage points for EL and former EL students and equal to the state rate for Asian students and students with disabilities. The percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was below the state rate by 16 percentage points for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students and by 2 percentage points to 4 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.
- In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 8 percentage points for Asian students and by 6 percentage points for White students, equal to or above the state rate by 1 percentage point for Hispanic/Latino students, high needs students, and students from low-income families, and below the state rate by 1 percentage point to 3 percentage points for every other group with reportable data.

In mathematics in Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 8 percentage points, from 51 percent in 2019 to 43 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 39 percent. In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations declined 13 percentage points, from 64 percent in 2019 to 51 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 50 percent (see Tables E3 and E4).

- In Grades 3-8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 12 percentage points for EL and former EL and by 1 percentage point to 4 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data, except Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students, which was 4 percentage points below the state rate.
- In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was above the state rate by 9 percentage points for Asian students, by 1 percentage point for African American/Black students, and White students, and below the state rate by 1 percentage point to 6 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.

In science in Grades 5 and 8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS declined 5 percentage points, from 45 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2022, which was below the state rate of 42 percent. In Grade 10, 40 percent of all students scored Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in 2022, which was below the 2022 state rate of 47 percent (Tables E5 and E6).

- In Grades 5 and 8, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in science was above the state rate by 8 and 9 percentage points for EL and former EL students and Asian students, and by 1 percentage point to 5 percentage points for African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, high needs students, and Low Income students. The percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations was below the state rate by 22 percentage points for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students and by 3 percentage points to 5 percentage points for White students and Students with Disabilities.

- In Grade 10, the percentage of students scoring Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in science was above the state rate by 23 percentage points for Asian students and below the state rate by 5 percentage points to 19 percentage points for every other group with reportable data.

The average student growth percentile (SGP) on the 2022 MCAS in Grades 3-8 was 46.2 in ELA and 48.9 in mathematics, which represent typical growth. In Grade 10, SGPs were typical in ELA (52.9) and mathematics (55.4)³ (see Tables E7-E10).

- SGPs in Grades 3-8 in ELA were typical for each student group with reportable data, ranging from 40.9 to 55, except low for students with disabilities (37.0). Mathematics SGPs in Grades 3-8 were typical for each student group with reportable data, except high for Asian students (60.9) and low for students with disabilities (39.3).
- In Grade 10, ELA SGPs were typical for each student group with reportable data, ranging from 44.3 to 56.9. In mathematics, SGPs were typical for each student group with reportable data, ranging from 49.5 to 58.4, except low for Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino students (38.7).

Norwood's four-year cohort graduation rate for all students increased 0.7 percentage points, from 94.8 percent in 2020 to 95.5 percent in 2022, which was above the 2022 state rate of 90.1. The five-year cohort graduation rate for all students improved 1.3 percentage points, from 95.1 percent in 2019 to 96.4 percent in 2021, which was above the 2021 state rate of 91.8 (Tables E16 and E17).

- The four-year-cohort graduation rate was above the state rate in 2022 by 21.9 percentage points for EL students; by 16.6 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students; and by 3.5 percentage points to 10.5 percentage points for every other group with reportable data, except for Asian students, which was 2.4 percentage points below the state rate.
- The five-year cohort graduation rate was above the state rate in 2021 by 16.4 percentage points for EL students, by 10.7 percentage points for Hispanic/Latino students, and by 2 percentage points to 8.8 percentage points for every other student group with reportable data.

The district's annual dropout rate decreased from 0.8 percent in 2020 to 0.4 percent in 2022, which is well below the 2022 state rate of 2.1 percent (Table E20).

- The dropout rate in Norwood for each student group with reportable data in 2022 was below the state rate for their statewide peers and ranged from 0.0 percent to 1.2 percent in the district.

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.

Leadership and Governance

Norwood’s leader is David Thomson, who was appointed superintendent in July 2017. He receives support from an assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; a chief of staff; and directors of strategic initiatives, finance and operations, student support services, technology, and athletics. These district officials, particularly the superintendent, work closely with the elected school committee members who represent Norwood residents through their oversight of the district. The school committee has five members, each serving a three-year term.

As outlined in the School Committee Policy Manual approved in September 2022, the school committee seeks to maintain communication between the district and the community, establish policies and contribute to decision making, and serve as a representative body of the Norwood community in public education. The district’s strategic plan and school improvement plans guide the school committee’s agenda.

The district’s strategic plan includes five strategic objectives: (a) investment and resource allocation, (b) facilities and operations, (c) innovative instruction and personalized learning, (d) programs and pathways, and (e) safe and supportive schools. The main findings from a recently completed equity audit were incorporated into the strategic plan and directly inform district and school improvement planning. The equity audit offered opportunities for the district to develop strategies to intentionally close access, opportunity, and achievement gaps.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a strong collaboration between district leaders and the school committee. The school committee meets regularly with the student advisory council to seek student input into policies and decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration between the school committee and district and municipal leaders to support long-term planning
District and school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong collaboration exists between district and school leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived visibility of central office leaders in schools from teaching staff
District and school improvement planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district strategic plan aligns with the main findings from a recent equity audit to intentionally close access, opportunity, and achievement gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach to families and staff to leverage school councils for meaningful participation in policy development and decision making
Budget development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals have autonomy to make spending decisions that align with district and school strategic plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost effectiveness of programs, initiatives, and activities designed to improve student outcomes

School Committee Governance

The school committee works in partnership with Norwood district administrators and the Town of Norwood to uphold laws pertaining to education and regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. A strong culture of collaboration exists between the school committee and district leaders, which is a strength for the district. Across focus groups, district leaders described the school committee's role as critical in the development of strategic plans, the review of district policies, and decision making. The superintendent communicates each Friday with the school committee, providing updates across several areas, including MCAS scores, curriculum improvements, and strategies to improve student outcomes. The district administrative team facilitates the strategic planning process, and transparency exists between district leaders and the school committee, which allows for continuous understanding and feedback from school committee members. School committee members shared an appreciation for the superintendent's partnership and collaboration:

He gives us the real nuts-and-bolts administrative perspective. . . We often look to him to explain why decisions were made the way that they were made in the schools. And often that's because he's citing relevant laws that he is aware of that we may not be aware of.

The school committee evaluates the performance of the superintendent every two years, in alignment with guidelines from DESE. Feedback across interviews indicated that the school committee developed a two-year evaluation cycle for the superintendent, and publicly available documents on the school committee webpage indicate that the committee approved the evaluation on March 9, 2022, describing the superintendent's overall performance as proficient.

A student advisory council provides an opportunity for some high school students to share input into policies and decision making. The school committee meets with the student advisory council every other month to receive feedback based on information gathered from all schools in the district. District leaders noted that representatives from the student advisory council do not regularly attend school committee meetings; however, they noted that as a student preference, bimonthly meetings became an alternative to regular participation at school committee meetings. This mutually agreed-on structure for incorporating student feedback into district decision making is a strength of the district.

Strong collaboration between the school committee and district leaders does not fully extend to municipal relationships; opportunities exist for improving the collaborative relationship between the school committee and municipal leaders. District and municipal leaders each expressed some challenges in communication, particularly about long-term budgeting and planning. Community members also described the disconnect between district and town leaders, and community members noted a desire to strengthen communication and understanding between the district and the town. Across focus groups, respondents highlighted an area for growth for the district when they described a need to strengthen communication and engagement between district and town leaders to support long-term planning for the district and budget sustainability.

District and School Leadership

An area of strength for the district is strong collaboration between the district leadership team and school leaders. The superintendent works closely with the district leadership team, including all

school leaders. He maintains a strong relationship and regular communication with the school committee, as described previously. District-level administrators meet twice per month with school leaders, and elementary school principals use the alternating weeks to meet as an elementary team. Across focus groups, district administrators and school leaders described collaborative relationships. The district leadership team uses regular meetings to monitor progress toward the district strategic plan and address barriers that arise throughout the year, as described in the District and School Improvement Planning section. The district superintendent expressed pride in his leadership team: “I’m lucky in that I have a group of people that are passionate about that work and want to see curriculum, instruction, and access for our students improve.”

Although the collaborative partnership is strong between district and school leaders, feedback from focus groups highlighted a lack of visibility of central office leaders at the school level, which is an area of growth for the district. Several teachers expressed that district leaders are not familiar with the day-to-day operations at the schools and do not have a regular presence within the schools. For example, one educator shared feeling that the district often is “talking about one thing, and what’s going on in my classroom is completely different.” Parents also described this disconnect, with one parent noting “a schism” between feedback received from administrators versus teachers in some situations.

District and School Improvement Planning

The district develops and follows a five-year strategic plan. District administrators, a representation of teachers, representatives from the school committee, and the finance committee convene to develop two-year action plans that align with the five-year plan. This process allows for revisions and updates, as well as input in action steps from stakeholders. In spring 2024, the group will begin developing a new five-year plan. The superintendent described a desire to hold focus groups with students and families to inform the planning more comprehensively, but noted capacity restraints including staffing and budget. District leaders described modifications made to embed recommendations from the recently completed equity audit into the district’s strategic plan. The recommendations included a prioritization of five strategic objectives that align with recommendations from the equity audit, posted as an update to the district’s strategic plan on their public website. This alignment and prioritization of equity-focused initiatives throughout the district’s strategic plan is a strength of the district.

School leaders expressed appreciation for the collaborative relationship with the central office, particularly in the development and execution of the strategic plan. One school leader stated, “Communication on [strategic planning], in terms of vision setting, in terms of carrying out the strategic plan and understanding it, has been strong.” The district also incorporates student perspectives into the strategic plan, based on data gathered through a student experience survey at each school. District leaders provide regular updates to the school committee about progress on school and district goals. Action steps and objectives are each assigned to specific individuals for monitoring, and progress is communicated through regular reports to the school committee and a live dashboard that is publicly available on the district’s website.

Although district and school leaders felt that the strategic planning process was transparent and inclusive, feedback from teachers and parents indicated not feeling meaningfully included in the

process, which is an area for growth for the district. Across focus groups, teachers expressed frustration in not feeling heard or valued by district leaders. Teachers described occasionally serving on district committees, but they frequently felt as if their contributions in those committees were not always valued, and their feedback was not always considered during decision-making processes. Across focus groups, teachers described often feeling that district administrators do not truly understand the realities within the schools, suggesting a need for increased visibility and collaboration. Feedback from parents was similar, indicating opportunities for increased collaboration between district administrators, teaching staff, and families. The district also administers a student experience survey at each school, which contributes to the development of goals and an increased understanding of students' perceptions and experiences within each school.

During the recent equity audit, parents received invitations to provide insight and feedback through focus groups. Parents appreciated these opportunities and expressed a desire for increased engagement with and collaboration between the district and families. One family member said,

We're as "Norwood" as Norwood can be, but I haven't necessarily been a part of a plan or anything, and I would love to be able to contribute. But there's a difference between contributing, for instance, "PTO [parent teacher organization] level contribution" and then contribution that's tangible and meaningful.

Each school has a school council that meets regularly and includes representatives from school leaders, educators, and family members. Interviews provided mixed feedback about the awareness and utilization of school councils, suggesting that practices vary across schools. For example, some school councils meet monthly, whereas others meet only six times throughout the school year. Likewise, school leaders noted challenges in meaningfully engaging school councils, including a lack of interest from parents and teachers to participate. Parents who were members of school councils described familiarity with school improvement plans through their involvement; however, other parents were not aware of opportunities to participate on school councils. Multiple parents across groups identified an interest in more meaningfully contributing to school- and district-level decision making. Together, this feedback highlights an area for growth around improving outreach to both families and staff to leverage school councils for meaningful participation in policy development and decision making.

Budget Development

District administrators, school leaders, the school committee, and municipal leaders described the budget development process as inclusive and transparent. School leaders have autonomy to make decisions with their budget that align with the district's strategic plan and the school improvement plans. As stated by one school leader, "We have a fair amount of independence and autonomy and decision making, but it's collaborative . . . We're working with the central office team; we're working with stakeholders of teacher leaders."

The school committee expressed concerns in current district-level decisions about staffing and meeting the needs of students. As enrollment increases, with a high proportion of Norwood students receiving special education services, school committee members believe that schools could benefit from additional teachers, more support to teachers, and additional support services, such as mental

health supports for general education students. Town leaders, who contribute to budget decisions and purchasing processes, acknowledged the limitations in the budget and the challenge in allocating resources to fund new teacher positions while considering long-term impacts and investments.

General agreement exists among school committee members and district leaders on needs within the district, including the need to review the cost-effectiveness of programs, initiatives, and activities designed to improve student outcomes, but clarity seems to be lacking on how the district is specifically using data to inform budget development.

Recommendations

- The district should improve collaboration with municipal leaders both for day to day operational and relationship purposes, and also to support a foundation for meaningfully addressing larger budgeting sustainability.
- Where logistically feasible, the district should find regular opportunities for central office leaders to have a greater presence in schools to build empathy and greater rapport with school staff.
- The district should seek to better leverage parental involvement in policy development and decision-making by first identifying existing barriers to participation in school councils where activity and inclusivity are lacking, and then adjusting engagement accordingly.
- The district should begin to evaluate the “return on investment” on its current initiatives, find ways to incorporate data to support new FY2025 budgetary requests, and, where necessary, reallocate resources in future budgets accordingly.

Curriculum and Instruction

Updating curricular materials to ensure alignment with Massachusetts curricular frameworks was a major focus for Norwood in recent years. To support this work, the Town of Norwood passed an override in 2019 that provided additional funding to make these changes possible. Since 2019, the district has adopted new curricula and assessments for elementary ELA and mathematics, new 6-12 science textbooks and materials, as well as a new elementary science curriculum. The district’s elementary ELA and mathematics curricula are both rated as meeting expectations according to CURATE.⁴

Feedback from district leaders and documents reviewed indicated an intent to continue regular reviews of instructional materials for quality and alignment to standards. The district developed a checklist to guide the review of curricula, as well as a protocol to ensure that all materials comply with Office for Civil Rights requirements.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Override funds from the town supported a refresh of curricular materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented curricular review processes
Classroom instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in Grades 3-8, particularly Els, outperformed the state in mathematics MCAS trends between 2019 and 2022. Curriculum coordinators support the implementation and alignment of curricular materials at the elementary level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased instructional rigor Access to nonevaluative coaching across all school levels to support differentiation and high-quality instruction Curricular representation of diverse cultures, experiences, needs, and interests Implementation and effectiveness of instructional strategies and structures to support students with disabilities
Student access to coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has expanded secondary pathways. The district has recently reduced barriers to student access to Advanced Placement (AP) and other advanced coursework. 	

⁴ CURATE: CURriculum RATings by TEachers. See <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate/>.

Curriculum Selection and Use

Norwood offers a comprehensive curriculum aligned with national and state standards for students in prekindergarten through 12th grade. In elementary school, for Grades K-5, Norwood uses Savvas MyView and Foundations (Pre-K–2) for ELA and Savvas Envisions 2020 for mathematics, and both received a rating of “meets expectations” on CURATE. For science, Norwood uses Mystery Science for Grades K-2 (not rated on CURATE) and StemScopes for Grades 3-5, which “meets expectations” on CURATE. The remaining curricula used in the district are not CURATE rated, including elementary school social studies (K-5) and science (3-5) curricula; the Big Ideas curriculum for mathematics (Grades 6-8); and district-created curricula for ELA, science, history, and social studies in Grades 6-12 and mathematics in Grades 9-12.⁵

District and town leaders described an override passed by the town in 2019, which provided considerable funding to support a curricular review and refresh across the district. District leaders described this override as critical to aligning curricular materials with updated state standards, a clear strength for the district. Following the override, the district convened various committees to review, rate, and advise on curricular decisions, including the most recent adoptions of a social-emotional learning curriculum (Character Strong) for Grades 1-5 and an elementary science curriculum. District leaders provided documents regarding their curricular review process for informing their decisions, such as a curricular review checklist, guidance from DESE on selecting curricula, and a form to document the review of all materials for civil rights requirements. District leaders also reviewed policies and guidance from other districts specific to curricular review processes and timelines. Although the district relied on multiple resources for implementation of the 2019 override of curriculum, an area for growth for the district will be to develop a clear written guidance for future curricular reviews to ensure that curricula remain aligned with evolving state standards and requirements. Related to this area for growth, teachers across focus groups described challenges they experienced throughout the curricular selection process. For example, elementary school teachers shared that teaching was challenging because as teachers piloted several different programs, it impacted their ability to collaborate around instruction.

Across grade levels, many teachers noted a desire for a stronger social-emotional learning curriculum, as well as professional development support for teachers to support students’ social, emotional, and behavioral health within the classroom, including the use of trauma-informed teaching practices. As noted by one teacher, “Kids cannot learn if they either are not ready or if they’re in trauma. It’s a clash. And what we’re finding is we’re not getting the support for dealing with kids who are in trauma and not learning.” The district recently selected a social-emotional learning curriculum (Character Strong) for Grades 1-5 next year. Currently, the middle school is using Character Strong, which means that next year there will be continuity in that language between Grades 1 and 8. In addition, district staff noted that preschool and kindergarten use another social-emotional learning curriculum (Second Step). Across grade levels, teachers described the strengths of the Character Strong program, while also noting that they believe additional support beyond the curricula is necessary to meet student and teacher needs within the classroom.

⁵ After the review occurred, the district provided supplemental information that the following curricula are also in use: Inspire McGraw Hill for science in Grades 6-8; PLTW in Grade 7; and We The People for social studies in Grades 5 and 8.

In general, high school teachers expressed the most satisfaction with the curriculum. Teachers work closely with their department chairs, offering ongoing feedback and discussion about what works well with the curricula and opportunities for improvement. Many appreciate the communication, supportiveness, and openness for continuous improvement. As one high school teacher stated,

We're always in communication with each other. I always feel I can ask any question in regard to my curriculum. I can take risks with my curriculum. I'll be supported, and that we all work together to make sure that our students' needs are being met.

District leaders noted that no systematic approach exists for documenting curricula at the time of the review, which is an area for growth for the district. District leaders described curricular documentation as living across many different Google folders/documents. At the elementary level, curriculum coordinators (organized by content area) maintain the majority of curricular documentation. At the middle and high school levels, department heads maintain curricular resources and materials.

Classroom Instruction

Three observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Norwood during the week of February 13, 2023. The observers conducted 89 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 Norwood, 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 Norwood is in Appendix B, and summary results are in Tables 17, 18, and 19 in this appendix.

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

- **Emotional Support.** Ratings were in the middle range for the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade bands (5.3, 4.5, and 4.5, respectively).
- **Classroom Organization.** Ratings were in the middle range for the K-5 grade band (5.8) and high for the 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands (6.4 and 6.7, respectively).
- **Instructional Support.** Ratings were in the low range for K-5 (2.6) and the middle range for the 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands (3.5 and 3.2, respectively).
- **Student Engagement.** For Grades 4 and up, where student engagement was measured as an independent domain, ratings were in the middle range for all grade bands: 5.1 for Grades 4-5, 4.9 for Grades 6-8, and 5.1 for Grades 9-12.

Overall, in the K-5 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of consistently strong emotional support, classroom organization, and student engagement (Grades 4-5). Instructional support ratings were in the low range in the K-5 grade band. In the 6-8 grade band, instructional observations suggest mixed evidence of consistently strong emotional support and student engagement, mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support, and strong evidence of high classroom organization. In the 9-12 grade band, instructional observations provide mixed evidence of consistently strong emotional support and student engagement, mixed evidence of consistently rigorous instructional support, and strong evidence of high classroom organization. Observation scores consistently in the low-middle range for Instructional Support dimensions supports increased rigor in instruction as an area for growth in the district.

Curriculum coordinators at the elementary level and department heads at the middle and high school levels ensure that curricula are aligned vertically across grades. At the district level, there is a curriculum coordinator for most content areas (ELA, mathematics, science, and multilingual learners), and they provide instructional coaching and support for elementary teachers with classroom instruction and implementation; for social studies, the high school department chair assists with elementary curriculum. With these coordinators supporting curricular implementation across all elementary schools, strong curricular alignment exists across the elementary schools. The district's capacity to support the implementation and alignment of curricular materials across all elementary schools is a strength for the district. At the middle and high school levels, department heads—who are full-time teachers who receive an additional stipend—take on the responsibilities of the curriculum coordination.

In focus groups, district staff described the various roles that curriculum coordinators and department heads play in supporting classroom instruction and curricular implementation. District and school leaders described instructional coaching as a critical role of the curriculum coordinators and the department heads. However, teachers had mixed opinions because they did not feel the staffing models allowed for true instructional coaching. For example, elementary teachers described how one content area curriculum coordinator is shared across six elementary schools and therefore was limited in their ability to provide true instructional coaching support. Likewise, secondary

teachers noted that because department heads were full-time teachers, instructional coaching was limited.

Some teachers expressed a disconnect between the types of supports that teachers are looking for and the supports provided by the curriculum coordinators. For example, some elementary teachers described requesting a curriculum coordinator to deliver a lesson from the new curricula to support their understanding of the new materials; however, teachers were asked to teach the lesson themselves while the curriculum coordinator provided feedback. Across focus groups, teaching staff sought additional support in differentiating curriculum. For example, kindergarten teams in one elementary school formed “pods” to collaborate about differentiation and scaffolding to address concerns they have with the developmental appropriateness of the curriculum. As one teacher noted,

We share resources . . . but a lot of it is classroom by classroom basics, using the resources that you may have in your room or your own outside collecting, visiting the library . . . to get more enriching texts.

Feedback from teachers in multiple focus groups suggested that differentiation strategies are teacher led and vary dramatically between schools and classrooms. District leaders also noted a need for more systemic approaches to differentiation to support equitable instruction for all learners across all schools, expressing a desire to “revisit” training in Universal Design for Learning that all district staff completed in prior years. Taken together, feedback from teachers and district leaders suggests an area for growth in the district around access to nonevaluative coaching to support differentiation and high-quality instruction along a continuum of student need at all school levels. Feedback from focus groups frequently pointed to the high rate of identification of students with disabilities (e.g., 25.3 percent in the district versus 19.4 percent statewide) as an indicator that the effectiveness of core instructional delivery strategies must be reexamined. Differentiation in instruction and culturally responsive materials were both frequently identified as areas of concern.

The district’s equity audit, conducted from May 2021 to February 2022, revealed many opportunities to strengthen strategies to equitably serve and support all Norwood students. Data collected for the equity audit revealed that a systemic, comprehensive approach to culturally responsive instruction for all learners was lacking. In response, the district partnered with the Highlander Institute to provide training for all district staff on culturally responsive instructional supports and practices, which will be described in more detail in the Human Resources and Professional Development section. Across district focus groups, feedback from students, teachers, and families revealed an area for growth with respect to the representation of diverse cultures, experiences, needs, and interests in curricular materials.

Feedback from district leaders, teachers, and families also revealed an area for growth related to instructional strategies and structures to support students with disabilities. The district offers a variety of programming for students with disabilities, including coteaching models with an inclusion setting, as well as substantially separate programming for students requiring more intensive and individualized supports. However, students’ performance data reveal declines in performance among students with disabilities in the district. For example, between 2019 and 2022, the ELA mean student growth percentile for students with disabilities declined from 41.2 to 37.0. In 2022, the ELA

mean student growth percentile for students with disabilities across the state was 41.8. Student performance data at the high school level reveal similar trends, with Norwood students with disabilities performing below the state averages for students with disabilities on Grade 10 MCAS. ELA and mathematics teachers described challenges with the coteaching model, including a lack of collaboration and respect between general education and special education teachers. Staff also described challenges supporting students in substantially separate programming, including a lack of curricular materials for special educators assigned to these programs, as well as little if any opportunities for general education teachers who support students in inclusive settings (e.g., history) to collaborate with special educators working most closely with students in the substantially separate settings (e.g., ELA, mathematics).

Student Access to Coursework

In focus groups, district leaders, school staff, and students each emphasized examples of ways that the district provides intentional opportunities for students to learn about and prepare for postsecondary educational pathways. High school students remarked that the messaging about preparing for college is clear and consistent. Students can take courses to earn college credits, as well as gain internship experience aligned with future career interests. In spring 2019, the district officially designated the Norwood High School Health Care and Social Assistance program as an Innovation Career Pathway program, and district leaders noted that they are considering adding a second pathway program designation for Communications. These expanded pathway programs are a strength of the district.

District leaders, school staff, and families all described efforts the district has made to reduce barriers to student access to AP, honors, and other advanced coursework, which is another strength for the district. Although requirements remain for entrance into honors and AP coursework, district staff described revisiting requirements in response to observed disproportionality in enrollment patterns and feedback through the equity audit. As a result, entrance requirements now focus on student motivation to complete honors and AP coursework, rather than grade point average requirements.

Recommendations

- The district should aim to improve its instructional support districtwide, with a particular focus on elementary grades' concept development, language modeling, and analysis and inquiry. The District Instructional Observation Report (Appendix B) includes more detail on these domains.
- The district should expand non-evaluative coaching across school levels, whether with curriculum coordinators, other administrators, or fellow teachers. The district should establish a set timeline and schedule for future curriculum reviews, identify leader(s) to manage each review process, and create formalized, documented procedures so that future reviews are consistent and streamlined.
- In future curriculum reviews, the district should prioritize representation of diverse cultures, experiences, needs, and interests in curricular materials.

- The district should build off its inclusion and coteaching model to prioritize high-quality Tier 1 instruction for all learners, establish common planning time for general education and special education teachers, and, when appropriate, create opportunities for students who are educated in substantially separate programs to participate in general education instruction.

Assessment

According to the district’s 2022-2023 assessment inventory, the district administers academic assessments, including Star Reading and Math assessments from Renaissance Learning” here, regularly and routinely for Grades K-12. In addition, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills measures student progress twice per year for Kindergarten and Grades 1-5 in one elementary school. The district uses the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten upon entering school.

Teachers, parents, and students each have access to Aspen, the district’s student information system, which houses information such as grades and attendance. District staff also have access to Renaissance to view student performance data, but these results are neither available in Aspen nor regularly communicated to parents or students.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is strong alignment between ELA and mathematics assessments available for Grades K-12. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal opportunities for teachers’ participation in assessment implementation planning Inclusion of measures related to student well-being to provide a comprehensive understanding of student, school, and district performance
Data use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School leaders collaborate with curriculum coordinators to use student assessment data to systemically improve instruction at the school and classroom levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures that support regular review of student assessment data by the district leadership team Alignment of structures and supports for the use of data within grade and/or department team meetings across all schools
Sharing results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators have easy access to Renaissance (ELA and mathematics) data to support classroom-level decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures and supports for sharing student assessment data with families and students in meaningful ways

Data and Assessment Systems

Norwood district leaders used funding from the town’s override to support the purchasing and implementation of formal assessment systems to support instruction. Interviews with district leaders suggested that although the district identified a need for updated student performance assessments that align to updated curriculum standards, a lack of funding prevented them from purchasing any. With override funding, the district successfully convened a multidisciplinary team of district and school leaders as well as teachers to review available products. The committee selected the Renaissance Reading and Math assessments, which are currently in use across all schools. This alignment of student performance measures across schools and grades is a strength of the district.

District leaders described that Renaissance assessments in Reading and Math were administered three times during the 2021-2022 school year and four times during the 2022-2023 school year. They indicated that the district is considering moving back to three times per year in response to feedback from school-based staff who raised concerns about time spent on testing. According to district leaders, the process for selecting the assessment product included district and school-based staff, including teachers. In focus groups with teachers, some were aware of the committee formed to select the measures, whereas others expressed not knowing how decisions about assessment selection were made. Related, changes to implementation (e.g., the frequency of administration) were described as decisions made at the district level, with no formal mechanism for including teacher input. An area for growth for the district is to identify increased formal opportunities for teachers to participate in assessment implementation planning.

Presently, the assessments used across the district provide a comprehensive understanding of student academic performance; however, measures related to student well-being beyond academic performance were not in the district's assessment inventory or referred to across focus groups. District documents indicated that the district administers the MetroWest Youth Behavioral Survey as well as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Both surveys examine long-term trends but, as designed, are only administered every other year. Therefore, an area of growth for the district is the consistent use of regular measures related to student well-being that complement academic student performance measures for a comprehensive understanding of school and district performance.

Data Use

The district has a district data team to identify strategies to support and align data use across all schools. However, district staff noted room for improvement with structures and systems to support data use at the district and school levels. District leaders indicated that although they occasionally review student performance data during their larger leadership team meetings, they lack true structures or systems to support the regular review of data, an area for growth for the district. For example, one district leader noted, "we did it once and then just ran out of time. It just wasn't a priority because we had so many other things we had to deal with." Multiple leaders interviewed pointed to the regular review of student performance data by the central office as a critical element needed to support more authentic review and use of student data at the school and classroom levels.

Across interviews, district staff described that systems and structures about data use vary from school to school and are school leader driven. School leaders and central office staff indicated that each school leader works closely with the district-level curriculum coordinators to inform their own schools' structures and systems. This process includes reviewing student performance data to inform school-level interventionists' schedules and caseloads and planning content for grade-level team meetings that occur once per month. Collaboration between school leaders and curriculum coordinators to structure the review of student performance data and inform school-level structures is a strength of the district; however, consistent across interviews and focus groups was a related area for growth in terms of aligning structures and systems to ensure systematic and equitable application of data review protocols and procedures.

A review of the district data team meeting notes indicates that this group is considering Data Wise as a potential approach to support an aligned system for data use across schools, in addition to sharing

general protocols and resources to support data use at all school levels. District staff described recent changes to the teachers' association contract to include two structured meetings per month for teachers by grade level, with one monthly meeting for school leader-driven agenda items and another meeting for teacher/grade-level team priorities. District and instructional staff noted that although the contract reflected this change, the structures to support effective analysis of student performance data during that time are not yet consistent across schools. Some teachers described the data as something they consult frequently to monitor student progress and plan instruction, whereas another reflected as follows: "I think I've gone into Renaissance and looked at the data; I can probably count it on one hand, three or four times. So, not a lot." An area of growth is to further support the meaningful use of data to inform instruction.

Sharing Results

School and district staff have access to all student performance data through the Renaissance platform. Despite a lack of systems to structure the review and use of data within teams, feedback from teachers indicated that most teachers were familiar with the process to access the data within the platform, which is a strength of the district. Interviews with district leaders indicated an awareness that additional support to ensure that teachers continue to understand how to access and use the data within Renaissance was necessary in response to system changes and staff turnover. This year, the district subscribed to SchoolZilla, a dashboard feature of the Renaissance platform to support the review of data from multiple sources (e.g., Renaissance, MCAS, attendance) within one platform; however, district leaders noted that they did not anticipate continued subscription to this service because they did not feel that it was used by district staff.

Parents and students have access to course grades, attendance, report cards, and other school records through Aspen, the district's student information system. Some parents expressed positive feedback about their ability to access information and set up customized alerts through Aspen to monitor their child's coursework. Parents described that in addition to academic data, quarterly report cards include comments from teachers regarding their students' behavior, but some expressed an interest in increased access to information about their child's behavior.

Aspen does not store Renaissance performance data, and district staff indicated that no formal structures or expectations exist for sharing performance data with students or families, which is an area of growth for the district. District staff indicated that occasionally Renaissance results may be shared through parent-teacher conferences at the discretion of the teacher and elaborated that they have not heard feedback from parents requesting access to the Renaissance results.

Recommendations

- The district should consider identifying and implementing an annual measure across all schools that evaluates student well-being and provides a deeper understanding of its student population.
- The district should set district-wide expectations for reviewing data, including formal processes, protocols, and routines that all educators should be doing. To support the data team, staff, and school leaders in doing so, the district should work with schools to reserve time specifically for data reviews and, where applicable, coach and lead sessions on data use.

- The district should review its expectations around sharing performance assessment data with families and regularly solicit input from students and families around the types of information that are most helpful.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The Town of Norwood manages most human resources procedures and processes for the district. School leaders have autonomy to manage staffing needs and hiring procedures within their schools, allowing direct involvement by principals in the hiring of their own staff. However, school leaders and district administrators expressed a desire for increased internal capacity related to human resources to provide more streamlined support and expertise in legal policies and procedures.

The district currently is integrating culturally responsive and sustaining practices into all aspects of education. Through training with the Highlander program, teachers have engaged with professional development focused on building tools to incorporate culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices in their classrooms.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of efficient human resource policies, procedures, and practices
Recruitment, hiring, and assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School leaders have autonomy in hiring decisions to meet the needs of school populations. The district closely monitors licensure compliance across teaching positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems and structures to sustainably recruit, hire, and retain a diverse workforce
Supervision, evaluation, and educator development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district is fully integrating culturally responsive and sustaining practices in all schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance evaluation completion and compliance Structures to support professional development on a variety of important topics
Recognition, leadership development, and advancement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for growth through leadership development and advancement

Infrastructure

Norwood previously designated one staff person within the business office for human resources tasks, but that position was restructured, and all human resources tasks are now the responsibility of Town of Norwood administrators. District staff recognized that this restructuring could potentially provide access to more advanced human resources expertise to support school and district leaders. Feedback from district and town staff suggested that although this restructuring allowed for some

efficiencies across town and district human resources tasks, the arrangement also has been a challenge for parts of the district's day-to-day operations and strategic initiatives.

Multiple district leaders indicated recent turnover within the town's human resources department. They are optimistic that with time, a recently hired director of human resources will help address further inefficiencies in the existing human resources infrastructure.

District staff described that although town human resources staff support some human resources responsibilities (e.g., job postings), many responsibilities still fall on school leaders. For example, recruitment for applicants and processing paperwork for hiring, including background checks, are responsibilities that rest with school leaders. School leaders described their increased need for human resources support because of the time they currently dedicate to recruitment and filling multiple vacancies. They also noted barriers to infrastructure related to turnover in the town offices. District leaders also noted documentation maintenance as an area of need within the district. For example, the hiring manual that guides hiring processes throughout the district is not available digitally (as it was written in 1999). Taken together, this feedback reveals an overall area for growth for the district to identify systems and structures to support human resources policies, procedures, and practices across all schools.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment

Norwood school leaders have autonomy to manage staffing needs within their schools, which is a strength for the district. Principals are directly involved in hiring their own staff and making recommendations of new hires to the superintendent. Following school leader recommendations, the superintendent conducts another interview and makes a final decision. In mid-February, the district leadership team assesses hiring needs, considering staff retirements and anticipated student enrollment.

The central office monitors teaching assignments closely to ensure that teachers are teaching in their field. DESE data from the 2021-2022 school year shows that 99.7% of teaching staff in Norwood are licensed, 100% are licensed without waivers, and 97.3% of teachers are teaching in their field. The district's close and careful monitoring of licensure is a strength for the district, with district administrators communicating regularly with principals and teachers regarding licensure compliance.

In interviews and focus groups, there was clear recognition across central office, school staff, and parents that the district aims to recruit and retain more racially and linguistically diverse educators throughout the district. This recommendation came from the equity audit and is reflected in Strategic Initiative 1.4: "Recruit, develop, and retain a highly qualified staff that reflects the diversity of the Norwood community, while creating leadership opportunities, building capacity within our staff, and fostering an affirming, equity-oriented culture." District leaders described attending and hosting job fairs to support recruitment of diverse educators, as well as supporting growth opportunities for paraprofessionals to pursue additional educator credentials. District leaders also described designing co-op opportunities for high school students to work in extended day programs, with a goal of a "grow your own teacher workforce" by fostering interest and preparedness for a role in education for students from diverse backgrounds. Despite these strategic and innovative initiatives,

feedback across focus groups indicated an area of growth for the district to identify additional structures and systems to sustainably recruit, hire, and retain a diverse workforce.

Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development

Norwood follows the guidelines and rubric for teacher evaluations as established in Massachusetts. Principals are responsible for evaluating all teachers. Teacher, Director, Department Chair, and administrator performance evaluations are tracked within Vector Solutions. This online system allows for clarity in tracking the number of observations, the assigned observer, the timeline, and the ratings. Through the evaluation system, evaluators provide actionable feedback related to student learning and professional goals.

District records suggest that teacher evaluations are consistently uploaded to an educator evaluation system. A review of the educator evaluation system indicated that teachers received ratings and feedback on their performance based on the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample of 10 percent of 328 professional teacher status teachers who were scheduled for a summative evaluation in 2021-2022. Seven summative evaluations randomly selected for review (27 percent) were not available because of noncompletion; however, educators did complete other requirements, such as providing multiple sources of evidence and developing a student learning and professional goal. Twenty-six evaluations (73 percent) were complete and not missing the required components, including a rating for each standard or an overall rating. A review of evaluation records shows the expected development of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART) goals is not consistent; only 22 teachers (67 percent) had student learning SMART goals and professional learning SMART goals included on their summative evaluation or goal setting forms. Fifteen of the educator evaluations (54 percent) included multiple sources of evidence, such as observations, student work samples, or other evidence to support progress toward student learning goals, professional learning goals, standards, and indicators. Eighteen of the summative evaluations (26 percent) available for review included feedback for each standard, and the majority of the evaluations (81 percent) included feedback identifying strengths, whereas only one evaluation included areas of improvement. Together this highlights an area for growth for the district around performance evaluation completion and compliance.

Vector Solutions also stores administrator evaluations. Twenty-nine administrators were due for a summative evaluation at the end of 2021-2022; however, only 12 summative evaluations were available for review and complete with performance ratings and assessment of progress toward goals. Of the evaluations reviewed, six evaluations included student learning goals and professional practice goals. Five evaluations included multiple sources of evidence to assess performance on summative evaluation standards. Nine summative administrator evaluations reviewed included evaluator comments with specific, actionable feedback identifying each administrator's strengths, and none of the evaluations reviewed noted administrators with areas for improvement.

At the district level, a professional development committee facilitated by the assistant superintendent informs decisions about district-provided professional development opportunities. For the last two years, all district-provided professional development focused on Culturally

Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy (CRSP), led by the Highlander Institute. This multiyear professional development opportunity targets all district staff, including central office administrators and school-based staff. In interviews, district administrators described how this dedicated professional development supports the intentional implementation of CRSP, with those practices eventually incorporated into instructional expectations and performance evaluations throughout the district. This emphasis on CRSP is a strength of the district.

In general, district leaders and school staff recognized the need for focusing on culturally responsive instruction throughout the district; however, many teachers expressed a desire for training on other important issues, such as behavior and social-emotional learning, to address more immediate student needs in their classrooms. Although a comprehensive (e.g., two year) commitment to professional development allows for deep learning in one area, an area of growth for the district is to identify structures to support professional development on a variety of important topics. One potential source of the disconnect between the training and what educators are seeing as immediate needs in the classroom may relate to the professional development selection timing and process. As one teacher observed, there is a

lack of flexibility that comes from what the students need, because PDs [professional development sessions] are planned so far ahead of time . . . they planned it out before COVID hit, and then they were just already shoehorned into it. And we're still doing it when our kids need something different.

To complement the district-sponsored CRSP trainings, curriculum coordinators, directors, department chairs, principals, and assistant principals support school-based professional development sessions. Some of these opportunities focus on topics such as social-emotional learning, restorative justice practices, and behavioral intervention support. However, district staff described limited time available to meaningfully address topics such as curriculum implementation, assessment, and data-based decision making. In interviews, teachers expressed frustration with the practice of devoting district-sponsored professional development to one topic exclusively because they saw this time as an opportunity to spread out training to these other areas.

In addition to district- and school-sponsored professional development, Norwood offers professional development specifically targeted to support new staff. As outlined in the new teacher letter and orientation agenda documents, new teachers attend a three-day orientation session in August. New teachers also have opportunities throughout the academic year to convene. Mentoring is available for all new teachers in the district. According to the Norwood Mentoring Program Booklet, the purpose of the mentoring program is “to provide a welcoming atmosphere with professional and emotional support. Our intent is to familiarize teachers with school culture and to encourage collegiality.” Teachers identified opportunities for strengthening the implementation of the mentoring program, including hiring enough mentors to guarantee that new teachers have a mentor in the same subject area. Multiple teachers expressed that the small stipend offered in return for this role was likely one cause of this shortage.

Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement

Norwood provides some opportunities for teacher recognition and to strengthen leadership development. For example, teachers can receive recognition for excellent teaching through nominations for a “Teacher of the Year” award. According to a district administrator and teachers, teachers receive small stipends to take on leadership roles, such as leading a committee, within their schools. However, consensus across district administrators, school leaders, and teachers indicated few opportunities for leadership roles for teachers. The district has room to improve the availability of opportunities for growth and leadership development for teachers.

Recommendations

- In collaboration with town officials, the district should revise and publish its procedure manual around human resources practices.
- The district should collaborate with the town’s director of human resources to better clarify responsibilities that district staff previously managed, prioritizing the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.
- In light of the limited critical feedback provided to administrators through the formal review process, the district should review its culture and intentions around feedback and ensure feedback is used to improve and further develop employee skills.
- The district should conduct a program evaluation, using both qualitative and quantitative data, to understand the efficacy of its two-year focus on a singular professional development topic.
- The district should establish additional pathways for teachers to take on new leadership opportunities, to develop a pipeline of future leaders and to benefit teachers’ personal growth.

Student Support

Norwood student support initiatives vary by school. The district prioritized funding to include building-based academic interventionists in each school. Currently, formal social-emotional learning programs are in place for the majority of students in preschool, kindergarten, and middle school, and the district recently selected a program for implementation next year in Grades 1-5. Each school has a multidisciplinary team that meets to review student data and develop targeted and/or intensive supports as needed.

Each school has an active school council that comprises school leaders, faculty, parents, and community members who meet regularly. Student leadership opportunities are available through various programs primarily at the middle and high school levels.

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
<u>Safe and supportive school climate and culture</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The district prioritizes safe, supportive, equitable, and inclusive environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consistent and equitable approaches for handling inappropriate behavior across school settings and to ensure that all staff, students, and families understand these approaches
<u>Tiered systems of support</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each school has a multidisciplinary team in place to use formative and summative student performance data to align supports and interventions. ■ The district prioritizes funding for interventionists in each school to support tiered instruction and interventions. ■ The district selected a social-emotional learning curriculum to be implemented in Grades 1-5 as a Tier 1 support. ■ A partnership with McLean Hospital provides support to school leaders and student support staff to develop and implement individualized plans for students with intensive social, emotional, and/or behavioral health needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alignment in practices and expectations for multidisciplinary teams, interventions, and progress monitoring across all schools ■ Clear structures to evaluate tiered systems of support at the school and district levels
<u>Family, student, and community engagement and partnerships</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The district employs Parent Square to streamline communications to families throughout the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engagement of families that increases participation in planning and decision making at the school and district levels

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

Overall, the district prioritizes the creation of a safe and supportive environment for students. The district's strategic plan includes three initiatives related to safe and supportive schools; each initiative integrates and builds on themes from the equity audit as well as content addressed through the district's multiyear commitment to CRSP, as described previously. This prioritization of safe, supportive, equitable, and inclusive environments is a strength for the district.

Classroom observations completed for the district review reveal that interactions between students and teachers were generally respectful, as evidenced by Negative Climate scores in the high range across all school levels. The results from the Views of Climate and Learning student survey indicate a relatively strong school climate across grades surveyed, as evidenced by overall aggregate school climate scores in the "favorable" range (51 out of 100).

Across interviews and focus groups, feedback consistently exhibited concerns about student behavior in all schools. Educators agreed that student behavior frequently interrupted learning and felt that schools lacked a systemic approach to responding to problematic behaviors. Feedback from parents also noted concerns about behaviors as well as a general frustration with the communication between school administrators and parents when behavioral incidents occur. Student feedback highlighted the need for increased consistency in both expectations and consequences for behavior in educational settings beyond the classroom (e.g. hallways, cafeteria), whereas teacher feedback suggested that this area for growth applies to classroom incidents as well. In general, this feedback highlighted two related areas for growth for the district. First, respondents described a need to build more effective and proactive approaches to support safe and supportive learning environments. One parent reflected that they observed more explicit instruction for students about expectations for technology use than for social, emotional, and behavioral expectations. In addition, feedback across groups highlighted a need for the district to identify consistent and equitable approaches for handling inappropriate behavior across school settings and to ensure that all staff, students, and families understand these approaches.

Tiered Systems of Support

Information collected through the district review confirmed that although descriptions and protocols vary, each school has a multidisciplinary team that meets with classroom teachers to review data and develop appropriate intervention and/or support plans based on student needs. In each school, the process typically involves a teacher referral, a review of student data, the development of a support plan as warranted, and a review to ensure the plan's effectiveness. The consistently implemented tiered system of support practiced by the multidisciplinary teams is a strength of the district.

The district supports the funding of interventionist positions across all schools to support their vision for tiered instruction and interventions to support student learning. The superintendent described prioritizing the use of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds to "inject resources into closing gaps" by funding staff to support instructional interventions, in addition to increasing programming to support student learning during vacations and facilitating credit recovery options at the high school level.

During the 2022-2023 school year, a district committee selected Character Strong, a social-emotional learning curriculum to be implemented universally in Grades 1-5. The middle school currently uses this program to support social and emotional learning. District staff also noted that a different program, Second Step, is used in prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The selection of a social-emotional learning curriculum for Grades 1-5 is a strength of the district; it supports a tiered framework for fostering social and emotional learning across all elementary schools.

The district formalized a partnership with McLean Hospital to provide consultation services to school leaders and student support staff to develop and implement individualized plans for students with intensive social, emotional, and/or behavioral health needs. Feedback across multiple interviews identified this partnership as a particular strength of the district. In fact, multiple staff who directly interact with this partnership expressed a desire to share this content more broadly throughout the district, to support classroom teachers in more effectively addressing and responding to challenging behavior in the classroom before issues become more intensive.

The district has multidisciplinary teams across schools and supports the funding of interventionists and curricular resources for a tiered system of support. However, across focus groups staff highlighted the fact that each team operates differently across buildings, which many felt presented challenges to truly equitable and inclusive instructional opportunities. An area for growth in the district is creating alignment across schools in terms of protocols, interventions, practices, and expectations related to progress monitoring. For example, some educators described decision rules for special education referrals based on student performance measures used in some but not all elementary schools. Moreover, feedback particularly from secondary level teachers expressed concerns about equity across elementary schools in special education referrals and eligibility decisions related to race and EL status. In some cases, secondary teachers questioned the actual presence of a disability among some learners with individualized education programs:

So they may not actually have a disability, but they may just need instruction in a different way or need to build relationships in a different way in order to find some investment in the material or in the content. And so I think there is, it's disproportionate, in terms of the demographics of people who are also being classified.

Data from interviews and focus groups plus a review of documents indicated that systems are lacking to evaluate the effectiveness of tiered supports at the school and district levels. Although school leaders are working with curriculum coordinators to review student performance data and refine school-specific processes, a clear plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the tiered system of support overall was not evident. District and community staff pointed toward the overall high percentage of students identified with disabilities (25 percent versus 19 percent statewide) as an indicator warranting closer examination of the effectiveness of tiered systems of instruction and support.

Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

The district ensures that families and students have multiple opportunities to engage with the district and support students' academic progress and general well-being. Families are represented on school council boards from each school, as well as PTOs. Students can participate in leadership roles. For example, students at the middle and high school levels may join a student advisory

council, which provides feedback to the school committee. In addition, district staff described various programs through which students may mentor other peers and participate in advocacy roles. For example, the district implements the World of Difference program through which students may serve in leadership roles related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In 2022-2023, Norwood adopted the Parent Square program for communicating information to parents and families. District leaders spoke to the strength of the platform in supporting the translation of information into multiple languages throughout the community. Multiple district staff and some parents agreed that this platform was helpful for streamlining all communications throughout the district. Use of this platform to streamline and support access to district and school communications is a strength of the district.

Feedback across focus groups highlighted an area for growth for meaningfully engaging families in district and school teams and structures. As noted previously in the Leadership and Governance section, multiple parents indicated that they were not aware of existing opportunities to participate in school or district decision making. Multiple respondents across focus groups highlighted a need to identify additional structures to support family engagement across school and district teams.

In addition to partnering with families and students, district leaders described partnerships with community agencies to support students and families. As described previously, staff frequently praised the partnership with McLean Hospital to support social, emotional, and behavioral support plans. In addition, district leaders described positive relationships with the Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) as well as regular collaboration with representatives from multiple Norwood community agencies, including town police and fire departments as well as social service organizations.

Recommendations

- The district should set district-wide expectations for handling inappropriate behavior and consider implementing a system like PBIS or Restorative Justice to ensure equity and vertical continuity across grades.
- The district should review its special education referral practices and establish consistent, equitable district-wide processes centered in student need that eliminate disproportionalities in special education referrals and eligibility decisions, especially for students of color and English learners.
- The district should initiate and establish a regular review process of its tiered system of supports to ensure that students' needs are being addressed effectively.

Financial and Asset Management

Town and district leaders collaborate throughout the budget development process to ensure that allocation and use of funding and other resources improve students' performance, opportunities, and outcomes. State funding recently increased in response to growth among high needs student populations. In addition, the Town of Norwood passed a substantial override in 2019 that supported various district initiatives. Although funding provided by the town regularly exceeds net school spending requirements, district and town leaders noted room for improvement in longer term budget considerations, and they highlighted the need to improve structures for collaboration and budgetary planning.

Historically, the district had internal staff dedicated to facilities and operations, but after restructuring, these positions are now organized within the Town of Norwood. Town officials described cost savings and efficiencies from this restructuring. The town's capital plan includes improvement projects related to district facilities. In addition, district staff maintain separate plans related to capital improvement planning related to district transportation and technology needs.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has increased capacity to ensure accurate budget documentation and reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to strategic plan initiatives in budget documentation
Adequate budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community provides sufficient general appropriation funds each year to exceed required net school spending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long-term strategy to plan for and address potential changes and/or shortfalls within the budget
Financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are increased internal controls and capacity through the budget office. 	
Capital planning and facility maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has effectively used funding to support capital planning and facility maintenance through collaboration with the town. 	

Budget Documentation and Reporting

Norwood maintains clear and accurate budget documents that include information about all sources of funds and the allocation of resources. District budgets from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2024 are publicly available on the district website. Norwood's budget documents and presentation to the school committee include pertinent information about the allocation of resources and the sources of funds. The current budget document provides information on funding sources, including federal and state grant funding and circuit breaker fund revenue. The presentation also includes historical

spending data from 2021 and 2022 for comparison to the current year's resource allocations. Budget presentations and documents contain expenses for fixed costs, district leadership and administration, and other school services. Budget documents also include historical data that goes as far back as fiscal year 2013 (depending on the specific item). District leaders noted no challenges related to budget documentation and reporting lately and attributed this success to recent restructuring within the Finance department. In addition to hiring a new director, positions within the office were restructured to support increased capacity overall and internal controls (described in more detail in the Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits section).

District leaders described collaborative interactions between school administrators, town officials, and central office staff when developing the overall budget. District leaders meet with the town finance committee throughout the budget development process to ensure that everyone agrees with and understands each other's challenges and needs. Across interviews and focus groups, district staff described clear alignment between the budget development process and the strategic plan; however, the budget documentation provided for review does not include any mention of the district's strategic plan or initiatives. With the transparency concerns raised by teachers and families throughout the review, this represents an area for growth for the district.

Adequate Budget

Feedback across focus groups indicated that district leaders use all available funding to support student performance. Multiple respondents not only noted significant budget challenges and restraints but also described ways in which district and town leaders are actively involved in advocating at multiple levels for increasing funding. The town recently saw a significant increase in Chapter 70 funding because of increases in high needs student populations. The Town of Norwood also passed an override in 2019 that supported several key district initiatives. A review of the Norwood Town Meeting Budget Presentation illustrates that the town has consistently exceeded net school spending since fiscal year 2013, but the percentage over required net school spending has grown each year; in fiscal year 2021, the town's contribution was 48.9% over the required net school spending. The consistency with which the community exceeds net school spending requirements is a strength for the district.

Both town and district leaders agreed about the room for improvement in their collaborative work to ensure common understandings and long-term strategies related to budgeting. As a recent example, district and community leaders described ambiguity and misunderstanding around an override agreement which was designed to guide override fund expenditures. Feedback across respondents suggested that there were different interpretations of the intent and terms of the override agreement. In interviews, some participants described feeling restricted by some stipulations from the override agreement based on rapid changes in student learning needs; however, other interviewees indicated that some spending has already fallen outside the override agreement stipulations. Ambiguity about the override agreement, combined with the significant increases in high needs student populations and funding provided through the override highlight an area for growth for increased collaboration between the district and the town to plan for and address potential fluctuations in the budget.

Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits

As mentioned previously, the district recently restructured its Finance department, and district leaders described the ways in which this restructuring supported internal capacity related to financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits. Prior to restructuring, major responsibilities such as payroll and grants were distributed to specific individuals. With approval from the school committee, positions were restructured, and training was provided to all department staff, which increased internal capacity to ensure that systems run smoothly—even if an individual was out of the office—and also allowed for greater checks and balances throughout the department. In addition, financial software replaced Microsoft Excel spreadsheets that were previously used for payroll encumbrances, for example. This increased internal capacity is a strength of the district.

In addition to internal audits conducted by the department, an independent auditor annually audits the end-of-year report. A review of external audit reports between fiscal years 2019 and 2021 indicated that any findings identified were promptly addressed by the department, with the fiscal year 2021 audit resulting in no findings of noncompliance.

District leaders described processes for collaborating with district staff to monitor and track grant spending. Prior to the department's restructuring, district staff described instances of having to return grant funds because of insufficient district capacity to ensure that funds were spent and reported appropriately. District staff described that such capacity problems no longer are an issue, and internal monitoring and collaboration ensures that all funds are spent and reported accurately.

Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance

The Town of Norwood's capital plan includes improvement projects related to district facilities. In addition, district staff maintain separate plans related to district transportation and technology needs. The town's fiscal year 2023 capital plan includes replacing the high school gym floor and multiple repair projects across multiple school buildings and grounds. The superintendent also noted that the community will begin construction on a new middle school building in June 2023.

Historically, the district had internal staff dedicated to facilities and operations, but these positions are now housed within the Town of Norwood. Town officials described cost savings and efficiencies as a result of the restructuring. For example, the town created new electrician, plumber, and carpenter positions, increasing their ability to manage projects internally and save on capital projects. The effective use of funding to support capital planning and facility maintenance through collaboration with the town is a strength of the district.

District leaders described transportation capacity as a significant operational and capital need. Despite having a structure and system in place with the town to replenish fleet needs, the district – like many others throughout the state – has experienced major supply chain issues. These issues related to fleet replenishment forced the district to pursue outside contracts to provide required transportation services, something that had significant budgetary repercussions.

Recommendations

- The district should include reference to its strategic priorities in its FY2025 budget documentation.
- The district should work to collaborate and align with town officials over how to proactively address fluctuations in the budget and competing priorities.
- Where feasible, the district should build redundancies into its transportation planning so that student transportation is uninterrupted by external market forces (e.g. supply chain issues).

Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in Norwood. The team conducted 89 classroom observations during the week of February 13, 2023, and held interviews and focus groups between February 13 and 17, 2023. 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
- Town representative

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

- Student and school performance data, including achievement and growth, enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates
- Data on the district's staffing and finances
- Curricular review process and timeline
- Norwood curriculum guides
- 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

Norwood Public Schools

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

February 2023



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Introduction

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

Three observers visited Norwood Public Schools during the week of February 13, 2023. Observers conducted 89 observations in a sample of classrooms across eight schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

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

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

Table 1. CLASS K-3 Domains and Dimensions

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Positive Climate ■ Negative Climate ■ Teacher Sensitivity ■ Regard for Student Perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Behavior Management ■ Productivity ■ Instructional Learning Formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Positive Climate ■ Teacher Sensitivity ■ Regard for Student Perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Behavior Management ■ Productivity ■ Negative Climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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*: 5.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	3	4	8	10	4	29	5.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	3	5	13	8	1	30	5.0
Grades 9-12	0	1	7	3	6	10	3	30	4.9

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 13] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 27] + [6 \times 28] + [7 \times 8]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 5.0$

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*: 5.5

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	3	14	7	5	29	5.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	3	12	11	3	30	5.4
Grades 9-12	0	0	2	3	7	11	7	30	5.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 3] + [4 \times 9] + [5 \times 33] + [6 \times 29] + [7 \times 15]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 5.5$

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*: 3.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	1	3	8	9	7	1	0	29	3.7
Grades 6-8	2	9	7	7	5	0	0	30	3.1
Grades 9-12	4	6	7	7	6	0	0	30	3.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 7] + [2 \times 18] + [3 \times 22] + [4 \times 23] + [5 \times 18] + [6 \times 1]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 3.3$

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

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		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	1	2	26	29	6.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	3	2	25	30	6.7
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	1	29	30	7.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as: $[(5 \times 4) + (6 \times 5) + (7 \times 80)] \div 89 \text{ observations} = 6.9$

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.

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.

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*: 6.5

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	1	6	4	18	29	6.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	1	3	9	16	30	6.3
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	2	3	25	30	6.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 2] + [5 \times 11] + [6 \times 16] + [7 \times 59]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 6.5$

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

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

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

Productivity

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Productivity District Average*: 6.3

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	5	11	13	29	6.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	2	5	7	16	30	6.2
Grades 9-12	0	1	0	1	4	0	24	30	6.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 14] + [6 \times 18] + [7 \times 53]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 6.3$

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

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

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

Instructional Learning Formats

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–3

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

Instructional Learning Formats District Average*: 4.8

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	0	0	3	4	17	4	1	29	4.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	3	6	16	2	3	30	4.9
Grades 9-12	1	2	2	4	16	5	0	30	4.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 2] + [3 \times 8] + [4 \times 14] + [5 \times 49] + [6 \times 11] + [7 \times 4]) \div 89$ observations = 4.8

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

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

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

Concept Development

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3

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

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

Concept Development District Average*: 2.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-3**	5	9	5	0	0	0	0	19	2.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 5] + [2 \times 9] + [3 \times 5]) \div 19 \text{ observations} = 2.0$

**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*: 4.1

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	1	3	1	2	2	1	0	10	3.4
Grades 6-8	0	3	6	5	15	1	0	30	4.2
Grades 9-12	1	0	7	10	9	2	1	30	4.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 2] + [2 \times 6] + [3 \times 14] + [4 \times 17] + [5 \times 26] + [6 \times 4] + [7 \times 1]) \div 70 \text{ observations} = 4.1$

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

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

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

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

Analysis and Inquiry

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

Analysis and Inquiry District Average*: 2.2

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	1	4	4	0	1	0	0	10	2.6
Grades 6-8	12	8	7	2	0	0	1	30	2.1
Grades 9-12	11	12	3	3	0	0	1	30	2.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 24] + [2 \times 24] + [3 \times 14] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 1] + [7 \times 2]) \div 70 \text{ observations} = 2.2$

**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*: 3.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-5	7	6	8	4	3	1	0	29	2.8
Grades 6-8	2	6	8	5	5	2	2	30	3.6
Grades 9-12	9	11	2	3	4	0	1	30	2.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 18] + [2 \times 23] + [3 \times 18] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 12] + [6 \times 3] + [7 \times 3]) \div 89 \text{ observations} = 3.0$

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*: 2.1

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades K-3**	6	5	8	0	0	0	0	19	2.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 6] + [2 \times 5] + [3 \times 8]) \div 19 \text{ observations} = 2.1$

**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*: 2.9

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	2	1	0	3	2	2	0	10	3.8
Grades 6-8	8	8	4	2	8	0	0	30	2.8
Grades 9-12	11	6	3	3	5	2	0	30	2.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 21] + [2 \times 15] + [3 \times 7] + [4 \times 8] + [5 \times 15] + [6 \times 4]) \div 70 \text{ observations} = 2.9$

**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*: 5.0

Grade Band	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	1	7	2	0	10	5.1
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	6	17	6	0	30	4.9
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	8	13	8	1	30	5.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 15] + [5 \times 37] + [6 \times 16] + [7 \times 1]) \div 70 \text{ observations} = 5.0$

**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	1	3	11	16	30	20	35	116	5.3
Positive Climate	0	0	3	4	8	10	4	29	5.3
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	1	2	26	29	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	3	14	7	5	29	5.5
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	3	8	9	7	1	0	29	3.7
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	3	5	28	19	32	87	5.8
Behavior Management	0	0	0	1	6	4	18	29	6.3
Productivity	0	0	0	0	5	11	13	29	6.3
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	0	3	4	17	4	1	29	4.9
Instructional Support Domain	22	28	26	9	8	4	0	97	2.6
Concept Development (K-3 only)	5	9	5	0	0	0	0	19	2.0
Content Understanding (UE only)	1	3	1	2	2	1	0	10	3.4
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	1	4	4	0	1	0	0	10	2.6
Quality of Feedback	7	6	8	4	3	1	0	29	2.8
Language Modeling (K-3 only)	6	5	8	0	0	0	0	19	2.1
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	2	1	0	3	2	2	0	10	3.8
Student Engagement (UE only)	0	0	0	1	7	2	0	10	5.1

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 3] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 8] + [6 \times 10] + [7 \times 4]) \div 29 \text{ observations} = 5.3$

**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: $([5 \times 1] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 26]) \div 29 \text{ observations} = 6.9$. In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

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

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

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

	Low Range		Middle Range			High Range		n	Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Emotional Support Domain	2	9	11	15	30	19	4	90	4.5
Positive Climate	0	0	3	5	13	8	1	30	5.0
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	1	3	12	11	3	30	5.4
Regard for Student Perspectives	2	9	7	7	5	0	0	30	3.1
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	1	3	11	18	57	90	6.4
Behavior Management	0	0	1	1	3	9	16	30	6.3
Productivity	0	0	0	2	5	7	16	30	6.2
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	3	2	25	30	6.7
Instructional Support Domain	22	25	28	20	44	5	6	150	3.5
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	3	6	16	2	3	30	4.9
Content Understanding	0	3	6	5	15	1	0	30	4.2
Analysis and Inquiry	12	8	7	2	0	0	1	30	2.1
Quality of Feedback	2	6	8	5	5	2	2	30	3.6
Instructional Dialogue	8	8	4	2	8	0	0	30	2.8
Student Engagement	0	0	1	6	17	6	0	30	4.9

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 3] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 13] + [6 \times 8] + [7 \times 1]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 5.0$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([5 \times 3] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 25]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 6.7$

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	4	7	16	13	19	21	10	90	4.5
Positive Climate	0	1	7	3	6	10	3	30	4.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	2	3	7	11	7	30	5.6
Regard for Student Perspectives	4	6	7	7	6	0	0	30	3.2
Classroom Organization Domain	0	1	0	1	6	4	78	90	6.7
Behavior Management	0	0	0	0	2	3	25	30	6.8
Productivity	0	1	0	1	4	0	24	30	6.5
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	1	29	30	7.0
Instructional Support Domain	33	31	17	23	34	9	3	150	3.2
Instructional Learning Formats	1	2	2	4	16	5	0	30	4.6
Content Understanding	1	0	7	10	9	2	1	30	4.2
Analysis and Inquiry	11	12	3	3	0	0	1	30	2.1
Quality of Feedback	9	11	2	3	4	0	1	30	2.5
Instructional Dialogue	11	6	3	3	5	2	0	30	2.7
Student Engagement	0	0	0	8	13	8	1	30	5.1

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 7] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 10] + [7 \times 3]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 4.9$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([6 \times 1] + [7 \times 29]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 7.0$

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

Table C1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance

Resource	Description
Transforming School Funding: A Guide to Implementing Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) from Education Resource Strategies	This guide describes a process to help districts tie funding to specific student needs.
Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook	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	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 Webpage	A suite of resources to support the use of high-quality curriculum, including Implement MA , 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 , 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.
Curriculum Frameworks Resources	Some of the most frequently used resources include “ What to Look For ” classroom observation guides; the Family Guides 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 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 a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for ELA/literacy, and much more.
Coherence Guidebook	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	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	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 2022-2023 school year.
Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems	Resources, considerations, and updates for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on racial equity.
Professional Learning Partner Guide	A free, online, searchable list of vetted professional development providers who have expertise in specific sets of high-quality instructional materials. Schools and districts can use this guide to easily find professional development providers to support the launch or implementation of high-quality instructional materials.

Table C5. Resources to Support Student Support

Resource	Description
Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool	Based on Five Essential Elements , these resources (see At-a-Glance overview) 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 of school operation.
MTSS Blueprint	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	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 .
State and local student survey data such as Views of Climate and Learning and Youth Risk Behavior Survey	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 (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)	RADAR is a suite of innovative data reports, case studies, and other resources that provide a new approach to resource decisions.
Planning for 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	A clearinghouse of school finance data reports and other resources available to district users and the public.

Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table D1. Norwood Public Schools: Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2022-2023

Group	District	Percentage of total	State	Percentage of total
All	3,486	100.0%	913,735	100.0%
African American	436	12.5%	85,662	9.4%
Asian	250	7.2%	67,010	7.3%
Hispanic	676	19.4%	221,044	24.2%
Native American	8	0.2%	2,155	0.2%
White	1,975	56.7%	496,800	54.4%
Native Hawaiian	27	0.8%	787	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	114	3.3%	40,277	4.4%

Note. As of October 1, 2022.

Table D2. Norwood Public Schools: Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations, 2022-2023

Group	District			State		
	N	Percentage of high needs	Percentage of district	N	Percentage of high needs	Percentage of state
All students with high needs	2,039	100.0%	57.4%	508,820	100.0%	55.1%
Students with disabilities	900	44.1%	25.3%	179,095	35.2%	19.4%
Low-income households	1,382	67.8%	39.6%	386,060	75.9%	42.3%
ELs and former ELs	508	24.9%	14.6%	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 3,551; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 923,349.

Table D3. Norwood Public Schools: Chronic Absence^a Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	3,685	13.6	12.9	28.6	27.7
African American/Black	470	15.5	23.3	38.3	32.0
Asian	281	15.9	5.6	32.0	15.4
Hispanic/Latino	687	21.8	26.3	45.0	42.3
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	110	18.7	15.2	29.1	28.4
Native American	5	—	—	—	37.8
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	31	10.5	4.3	22.6	32.1
White	2,101	10.7	8.3	20.6	22.1
High needs	2,164	19.4	21.7	37.7	37.1
Low income ^b	1,614	—	—	42.7	40.6
ELs	529	19.9	21.9	40.8	39.9
Students w/disabilities	909	17.2	23.0	37.0	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. This change also affects the high needs group.

Table D4. Norwood Public Schools: 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	\$49,415,540	\$49,345,286	\$52,736,691	\$52,034,085	\$49,628,771	\$49,503,277
By municipality	\$16,545,466	\$16,281,395	\$17,067,203	\$17,241,691	\$22,520,044	\$24,766,603
Total from local appropriations	\$65,961,006	\$65,626,681	\$69,803,894	\$69,275,776	\$72,148,815	\$74,269,880
From revolving funds and grants	—	\$6,365,419	—	\$8,474,028	—	\$10,613,575
Total expenditures	—	\$71,992,101	—	\$77,749,804	—	\$84,883,455
Chapter 70 aid to education program						
Chapter 70 state aid ^a	—	\$8,052,711	—	\$9,166,992	—	\$9,271,812
Required local contribution	—	\$32,400,134	—	\$33,534,173	—	\$34,547,211
Required net school spending ^b	—	\$40,452,845	—	\$42,701,165	—	\$43,819,023
Actual net school spending	—	\$59,241,035	—	\$63,009,526	—	\$64,891,828
Over/under required (\$)	—	\$18,788,190	—	\$20,308,361	—	\$21,072,805
Over/under required (%)	—	46.4%	—	47.6%	—	48.1%

Note. Data as of February 10, 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. Norwood Public Schools: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2020-2022

Expenditure category	2020	2021	2022
Administration	\$548	\$613	\$671
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$787	\$890	\$970
Teachers	\$7,014	\$7,470	\$7,878
Other teaching services	\$1,409	\$1,912	\$1,835
Professional development	\$79	\$177	\$143
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	\$443	\$739	\$473
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	\$521	\$611	\$678
Pupil services	\$1,408	\$1,458	\$1,941
Operations and maintenance	\$1,489	\$1,700	\$1,792
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	\$2,994	\$3,331	\$3,427
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$16,693	\$18,901	\$19,808

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

Appendix 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. Norwood Public Schools: 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	1,521	52	44	38	41	10	16	19	17
African American/Black	203	33	26	24	26	22	27	33	27
Asian	100	70	62	63	63	3	4	5	8
Hispanic/Latino	281	33	28	20	22	15	24	33	31
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino	50	26	39	32	48	12	18	28	14
Native American	2	—	—	—	29	—	—	—	25
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	9	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	17
White	876	59	50	44	48	8	12	13	11
High needs	945	32	26	22	24	19	25	29	28
Low income ^a	699	—	—	20	24	—	—	31	28
ELs and former ELs	347	34	29	23	20	14	24	29	34
Students w/disabilities	434	20	16	11	11	30	35	42	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E2. Norwood Public Schools: 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	230	64	61	63	58	5	12	7	8
African American/Black	33	42	35	39	41	4	24	9	13
Asian	15	85	92	87	79	0	0	0	4
Hispanic/Latino	31	35	32	39	38	19	16	19	17
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	80	—	—	62	0	—	—	6
Native American	—	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	8
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	45	—	—	—	16
White	146	69	72	71	65	3	9	5	4
High needs	109	37	31	39	38	12	26	15	15
Low income ^a	84	—	—	40	40	—	—	13	14
ELs and former ELs	15	20	19	20	21	40	33	27	30
Students w/disabilities	47	23	19	17	20	13	37	28	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E3. Norwood Public Schools: 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	1,523	51	36	43	39	10	20	15	17
African American/Black	204	22	18	23	19	25	37	30	31
Asian	101	86	65	70	69	3	7	4	6
Hispanic/Latino	282	28	15	23	18	15	34	26	32
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	50	43	29	40	44	17	20	16	16
Native American	2	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	23
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	9	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	19
White	875	58	42	51	47	7	14	9	11
High needs	948	32	20	27	22	19	32	24	28
Low income ^a	701	—	—	23	20	—	—	26	29
ELs and former ELs	347	41	25	33	21	14	29	21	32
Students w/disabilities	435	19	13	16	12	32	42	38	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E4. Norwood Public Schools: 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	226	64	42	51	50	8	17	11	10
African American/Black	33	42	14	27	26	17	35	18	20
Asian	15	85	92	87	78	0	0	0	4
Hispanic/Latino	30	48	14	20	26	19	26	37	21
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	60	—	—	53	0	—	—	10
Native American	—	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	16
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	19
White	143	69	50	60	59	6	12	5	6
High needs	106	37	13	26	28	19	38	23	19
Low income ^a	81	—	—	28	29	—	—	21	19
ELs and former ELs	15	14	19	13	17	29	33	53	32
Students w/disabilities	45	16	3	13	15	37	52	38	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E5. Norwood Public Schools: 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	495	45	40	40	42	13	16	15	18
African American/Black	68	16	24	26	21	27	27	32	31
Asian	31	59	68	74	65	4	8	3	8
Hispanic/Latino	95	27	16	21	20	21	28	24	33
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	19	35	46	26	48	29	15	16	15
Native American	—	—	—	—	28	—	—	—	25
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	41	—	—	—	20
White	281	53	46	47	52	9	13	9	10
High needs	309	24	21	27	24	26	27	23	29
Low income ^a	222	—	—	25	23	—	—	27	30
ELs and former ELs	98	26	20	26	18	19	26	20	37
Students w/disabilities	149	15	15	12	15	40	37	40	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E6. Norwood Public Schools: 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	210	—	—	40	47	—	—	15	14
African American/Black	25	—	—	16	25	—	—	20	25
Asian	15	—	—	93	70	—	—	0	6
Hispanic/Latino	28	—	—	4	23	—	—	46	28
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	—	51	—	—	—	12
Native American	—	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	14
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	45	—	—	—	23
White	137	—	—	47	56	—	—	9	8
High needs	92	—	—	20	26	—	—	29	24
Low income ^a	67	—	—	21	26	—	—	28	25
ELs and former ELs	13	—	—	8	13	—	—	38	43
Students w/disabilities	43	—	—	9	16	—	—	44	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E7. Norwood Public Schools: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grades 3-8, 2019 and 2022

Group	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
All students	1,152	46.6	46.2	49.8
African American/Black	138	40.6	41.1	48.8
Asian	64	48.5	55.4	58.5
Hispanic/Latino	208	45.6	42.1	46.5
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	41	42.5	40.9	51.5
Native American	1	—	—	46.2
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	4	—	—	51.7
White	696	47.7	47.8	50.0
High needs	678	43.0	43.4	46.7
Low income ^a	497	—	42.9	46.5
ELs and former ELs	237	46.5	46.0	47.7
Students w/disabilities	305	41.2	37.0	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E8. Norwood Public Schools: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grade 10, 2019 and 2022

Group	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
All students	184	59.7	52.9	50.0
African American/Black	22	57.3	51.1	49.8
Asian	14	—	—	56.0
Hispanic/Latino	23	—	44.3	47.6
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	50.6
Native American	—	—	—	54.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	49.5
White	120	61.1	53.4	50.1
High needs	80	54.8	54.6	47.7
Low income ^a	60	—	56.9	47.2
ELs and former ELs	6	—	—	50.5
Students w/disabilities	37	53.8	47.7	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E9. Norwood Public Schools: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grades 3-8, 2019 and 2022

Group	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
All students	1,155	46.9	48.9	49.9
African American/Black	139	43.3	44.8	47.0
Asian	64	52.2	60.9	59.8
Hispanic/Latino	212	49.8	50.0	46.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	41	44.7	53.1	51.0
Native American	1	—	—	49.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	4	—	—	49.9
White	694	46.7	47.9	50.4
High needs	683	45.0	46.7	47.1
Low income ^a	502	—	46.8	46.4
ELs and former ELs	238	50.7	51.6	48.6
Students w/disabilities	308	43.3	39.3	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E10. Norwood Public Schools: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile in Grade 10, 2019 and 2022

Group	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
All students	186	59.4	55.4	50.0
African American/Black	23	63.1	50.6	45.6
Asian	14	—	—	57.3
Hispanic/Latino	23	—	38.7	44.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	—	50.0
Native American	—	—	—	46.6
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	41.2
White	121	58.3	58.4	51.6
High needs	81	51.7	52.9	46.7
Low income ^a	61	—	54.3	45.6
ELs and former ELs	7	—	—	48.9
Students w/disabilities	38	43.2	49.5	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E11. Norwood Public Schools: 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	269	62	52	48	44	4	7	14	15
4	266	54	49	39	38	7	12	14	16
5	278	50	45	39	41	7	10	9	13
6	250	62	38	35	41	12	22	26	22
7	239	49	33	31	41	13	28	28	19
8	219	37	42	32	42	17	18	26	18
3-8	1,521	52	44	38	41	10	16	19	17
10	230	64	61	63	58	5	12	7	8

Table E12. Norwood Public Schools: 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	269	57	39	50	41	7	20	16	20
4	267	61	37	46	42	9	15	13	17
5	278	60	48	45	36	7	15	8	16
6	250	53	31	41	42	10	24	13	15
7	238	36	24	34	37	13	27	25	19
8	221	42	32	37	36	15	20	19	17
3-8	1,523	51	36	43	39	10	20	15	17
10	226	64	42	51	50	8	17	11	10

Table E13. Norwood Public Schools: 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	274	56	45	44	43	12	15	13	18
8	221	35	33	35	42	15	18	19	18
5 and 8	495	45	40	40	42	13	16	15	18
10	210	—	—	40	47	—	—	15	14

Note. Grade 10 results for the spring 2021 STE are not provided because students in the class of 2023 were not required to take the STE test. Information about 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. Norwood Public Schools: ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2019 and 2022

Grade	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
3	—	—	—	—
4	244	52.7	50.5	50.0
5	257	44.2	51.7	49.9
6	232	54.0	45.8	49.8
7	218	41.0	38.4	49.7
8	201	40.4	42.6	49.7
3-8	1,152	46.6	46.2	49.8
10	184	59.7	52.9	50.0

Table E15. Norwood Public Schools: Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2019 and 2022

Grade	N (2022)	2019	2022	State (2022)
3	—	—	—	—
4	245	57.2	50.9	50.0
5	258	52.0	57.0	50.0
6	233	37.7	36.5	49.8
7	217	33.2	40.4	49.9
8	202	54.7	59.4	49.8
3-8	1,155	46.9	48.9	49.9
10	186	59.4	55.4	50.0

Table E16. Norwood Public Schools: Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	268	94.8	95.2	95.5	90.1
African American/Black	29	93.8	95.5	89.7	86.2
Asian	16	100	100	93.8	96.2
Hispanic/Latino	45	82.4	92.1	97.8	81.2
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4	—	100	—	88.7
Native American	—	—	—	—	82.2
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	81.3
White	173	98.7	95.2	96.0	93.2
High needs	144	90.5	92.0	92.4	83.9
Low income ^a	127	92.8	91.3	93.7	83.2
ELs	20	80.0	88.9	95.0	73.1
Students w/disabilities	48	84.6	86.0	83.3	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E17. Norwood Public Schools: Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2019-2021

Group	N (2021)	2019	2020	2021	State (2021)
All students	250	95.1	96.4	96.4	91.8
African American/Black	22	92.6	97.9	95.5	88.1
Asian	14	87.5	100	100	97.0
Hispanic/Latino	38	94.1	85.3	94.7	84.0
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino	8	88.9	—	100	91.2
Native American	—	—	—	—	84.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	87.7
White	168	96.4	99.4	96.4	94.4
High needs	112	90.9	93.7	93.8	85.8
Low income ^a	92	90.4	95.9	92.4	85.1
ELs	18	90.5	80.0	94.4	78.0
Students w/disabilities	50	85.7	92.3	88.0	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E18. Norwood Public Schools: In-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	3,658	2.1	0.5	1.8	1.6
African American/Black	462	3.4	1.3	3.2	2.2
Asian	285	—	—	—	0.4
Hispanic/Latino	686	2.6	0.7	3.6	2.1
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino	109	—	—	—	1.8
Native American	5	—	—	—	2.4
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	29	—	—	—	1.9
White	2,082	2.1	0.3	1.2	1.4
High needs	2,157	3.2	0.8	2.9	2.2
Low income ^a	1,591	—	—	3.3	2.3
ELs	540	—	—	1.5	1.4
Students w/disabilities	933	4.9	1.0	4.2	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E19. Norwood Public Schools: Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	3,658	0.9	0.3	2.4	3.1
African American/Black	462	1.4	1.0	5.8	6.2
Asian	285	—	—	—	0.7
Hispanic/Latino	686	0.9	0.3	4.1	4.9
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino	109	—	—	—	3.5
Native American	5	—	—	—	4.3
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	29	—	—	—	3.6
White	2,082	0.9	0.1	1.4	2.1
High needs	2,157	1.3	0.4	3.5	4.6
Low income ^a	1,591	—	—	4.0	5.2
ELs	540	—	—	1.1	3.5
Students w/disabilities	933	2.2	0.2	4.9	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E20. Norwood Public Schools: Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	983	0.8	0.0	0.4	2.1
African American/Black	130	2.4	0.0	0.0	2.8
Asian	55	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	163	0.7	0.0	1.2	4.3
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/ Latino	22	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4
Native American	1	—	—	—	4.3
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	3	—	—	—	1.2
White	609	0.5	0.0	0.3	1.3
High needs	459	1.9	0.0	0.7	3.6
Low income ^a	364	1.7	0.0	0.8	3.8
ELs	49	2.2	0.0	0.0	7.8
Students w/disabilities	168	0.7	0.0	0.6	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.

Table E21. Norwood Public Schools: Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2020-2022

Group	N (2022)	2020	2021	2022	State (2022)
All students	529	69.5	66.8	83.7	64.9
African American/Black	70	50.0	40.8	67.1	55.5
Asian	31	95.7	89.3	96.8	84.9
Hispanic/Latino	89	49.2	35.5	66.3	49.2
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	10	53.8	84.6	90.0	66.1
Native American	1	—	—	—	50.0
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1	—	—	—	65.4
White	327	76.5	75.3	90.5	69.5
High needs	258	43.0	45.6	71.3	49.1
Low income ^a	214	48.9	46.5	72.4	50.1
ELs	30	5.0	14.3	50.0	30.0
Students w/disabilities	98	29.1	35.8	54.1	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](#). This change also affects the high needs group.