

Somerville Public Schools

Comprehensive District Review Report

April 2026

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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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

Pedro Martinez
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 Somerville Public Schools (hereafter, Somerville) in April 2026. Data collection activities associated with the review included interviews, focus groups, and document reviews and were designed to understand how districts operate in support of continuous improvement efforts. The review focused on the six standards (and related indicators) that DESE has identified as being important components of district effectiveness. The resulting report provides an in-depth look at district systems, policies, and practices and includes recommendations to promote systemic improvements and advance equitable student outcomes and experiences.¹

In addition, six observers visited Somerville to collect data on instructional practices in classrooms during the week of April 6, 2026. The observers conducted 73 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused primarily on literacy, English language arts (ELA), and mathematics. The observers used 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 which guided all classroom observations in the district. These observers followed the three grade-band levels of the CLASS protocols: PK-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

Leadership and Governance

Somerville demonstrates strong strategic coherence in its leadership and governance. The district's five-year strategic plan is organized around four priority areas that emerged from a broad and inclusive engagement process involving students, families, staff, and community partners. District leaders consistently use the strategic plan to guide budget development, school improvement planning, and instructional decision making. A notable example of this alignment is the fiscal year 2026 budget, which is explicitly organized around the plan's priority areas.

The district also employs a structured approach to school improvement planning. Schools develop three-year plans aligned with district priorities and organized around measurable goals. Formal data cycles, including instructional rounds and designated data review days, connect school-level progress monitoring to central office oversight and support ongoing implementation of district priorities. In addition, the district benefits from a collaborative leadership culture among principals. Regular cross-building walkthroughs and the informal exchange of tools and strategies promote peer learning and foster collaboration across schools. School committee members described a positive working relationship with the superintendent, citing his transparency, student-centered focus, and willingness to address difficult questions in public forums.

The district has several opportunities to further strengthen leadership and governance. Although Somerville maintains required advisory structures, including a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC), multiple families reported that they were unaware of the council until they needed

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

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

support for their children. Increasing awareness of the SEPAC and the role it plays in supporting families of students with disabilities represents an opportunity for growth.

Curriculum and Instruction

Somerville has established a clear and collaboratively developed instructional vision through its Vision for Excellent Instruction. The framework is explicitly aligned to district improvement priorities and emphasizes positive classroom culture, student-focused planning, access to grade-level standards for all learners, and student agency and engagement. The district supports implementation of this vision through district- and school-level instructional leadership teams, improvement dashboards, walkthrough data, and participation in TNTP's Learning Acceleration Network. These structures provide a foundation for monitoring instructional practices and advancing district priorities. Another notable strength is the district's structured approach to curriculum review and instructional materials adoption. Somerville has established a multiyear process for selecting high-quality instructional materials that includes EdReports and CURATE reviews, broad stakeholder engagement, and piloting. Through this process, the district has made substantial progress toward adopting high-quality instructional materials across core content areas in grades K–8. Additionally, equity serves as a central organizing principle in curriculum and instructional decision making. Curriculum review teams intentionally include special education and multilingual learner representatives, district leaders routinely examine disaggregated student data, and the district offers a range of multilingual learner programs alongside expanding language-accessibility supports. Students also benefit from broad access to learning opportunities through a tiered academic intervention framework, the Honors for All initiative, and multiple career and technical education pathways. In addition, strong CLASS Emotional Support scores suggest that classrooms are generally positive and supportive environments in which students feel known and respected.

Despite these strengths, variation in staff familiarity with the Vision for Excellent Instruction suggests that the district has additional work to do to establish a common understanding of the framework across all schools. While district leaders consistently reference the vision, some educators, particularly at the high school level, were less familiar with it as a named framework. Building greater awareness and ownership of the vision among educators would strengthen coherence in instructional practice districtwide. The district's approach to monitoring curriculum and instructional implementation also varies across schools. Because building leaders retain considerable autonomy over walkthrough processes and documentation, the consistency of implementation monitoring differs by school and content area. Greater alignment in monitoring practices would provide district leaders with clearer information about the quality and consistency of curriculum implementation, particularly in mathematics and in grades and schools where high-quality instructional materials have not yet been fully adopted. Classroom use of HQIM was notably not observed at the high school level. The district's academic intervention systems could also be strengthened. While Somerville offers a tiered intervention framework, stakeholders described a need for more robust mathematics interventions and a greater emphasis on preventative rather than reactive student supports. Addressing these challenges would help ensure that all students receive timely and appropriately targeted support. Finally, although classroom environments are generally positive, CLASS results in Instructional Dialogue, Analysis and Inquiry, and Content Understanding indicate that many classrooms remain largely teacher-directed. Increasing opportunities for student discussion, inquiry,

and collaborative sensemaking would help advance the district's instructional vision and promote deeper student engagement with content.

Assessment

Somerville has established a strong, data-centered culture that supports continuous improvement, equity, and strategic decision making. The district utilizes a wide range of academic and nonacademic data sources, supported by a published assessment calendar and a unified data platform implemented districtwide during the 2025–2026 school year. A notable strength is the district's integration of equity-focused data analysis into both its technology infrastructure and school improvement planning processes. Schools are required to identify baseline subgroup performance, set measurable goals aligned with strategic priorities, and monitor progress through regular data reviews. District and school leaders consistently describe data as a tool for improvement, equity, and strategic decision making rather than educator evaluation. The consistency of this message across district and school leadership reinforces a shared approach to data use and continuous improvement. The district has also invested in building educator capacity to use data effectively. Universal access to an integrated data platform, combined with embedded coaching support, strengthens collaborative data use during common planning time and supports educators in analyzing and responding to student performance data. In addition, the district has invested in a communication platform that automatically translates messages into families' preferred languages. This tool supports two-way multilingual communication and demonstrates a strong commitment to language accessibility for families of multilingual learners.

The district has several opportunities to strengthen its assessment practices. Although educators understand the purpose of data use, many reported uncertainty about how the district's broader vision for data translates into specific instructional practices and classroom expectations. Providing clearer guidance on how to move from data analysis to concrete instructional actions remains an area for growth. Families also described inconsistencies in how schools and teachers communicate information about student performance. Families of multilingual learners raised concerns about the timeliness and accessibility of information in their home languages. Establishing more consistent, proactive, and accessible communication practices across schools and classrooms, with particular attention to the needs of multilingual families, represents an important opportunity for growth. Finally, grading practices vary considerably across classrooms and schools, leaving students and families uncertain about what grades represent. Developing common expectations for grading practices would provide students and families with clearer, more consistent information about student progress and strengthen the district's overall approach to assessment.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Somerville has established coherent and well-developed human resources and professional development systems that support educator hiring, recruitment, development, and retention. The district maintains a centralized personnel structure that manages the full employment lifecycle and is guided by a documented onboarding process. The district also maintains a regular structure for labor-management communication, including monthly meetings between union leadership and the superintendent's team. This collaborative relationship is reflected in the successful negotiation of a

new contract that includes a BIPOC educator retention clause and represents a notable strength of the district. Professional learning is similarly well organized and aligned to district priorities. The district's tiered professional development structure distinguishes among districtwide, departmental, and school-based learning opportunities, all of which are expected to align with the district's Vision for Excellent Instruction. In addition, the district has invested in structures that support educator collaboration and continuous learning. Contractually protected, educator-driven weekly common planning time and the development of collaboration leaders promote shared learning and collective problem solving among educators. Another strength is the district's comprehensive induction and mentoring program, which pairs all new educators with trained mentors and provides structured support over multiple years.

The district has several opportunities to strengthen its human resources and professional development systems. Staff currently lack self-service access to payroll and staffing information and continuing the transition to a more fully integrated and accessible human resources information system is an area for growth. The district also does not yet have formal processes to ensure that its strongest educators are equitably distributed across schools. Developing a more systematic, data-informed approach to assigning educators based on school needs represents an opportunity to strengthen equitable access to effective instruction. A review of evaluation records found that teacher evaluations were generally complete, but only 62 percent of administrator evaluations were available for review. Strengthening the consistency of administrator evaluations, including the incorporation of district or school improvement SMART goals, is an area for growth. In addition, monitoring working conditions, particularly educator workload associated with multiple simultaneous curriculum implementations and the retention of a diverse workforce, remains an important area of focus.

Although the district has established a shared instructional vision, the frequency, structure, and follow-up of observation cycles vary across schools. Providing clearer expectations for administrators and coaches regarding classroom observations and actionable feedback represents an opportunity for growth. Finally, ensuring that common planning time is consistently focused, well structured, and meaningful for educators remains an important opportunity for growth for the district.

Student Support

Somerville has built a broad student support infrastructure focused on safe and supportive school environments, student health and well-being, family and community partnerships, and MTSS. The district's systems for social-emotional learning and restorative justice provide a foundation for safe and supportive learning environments. Its approach to attendance also reflects a whole-child orientation, emphasizing nonpunitive engagement strategies and regular review of attendance data to better understand and respond to student needs. In addition, Somerville demonstrates a strong commitment to student mental and behavioral health through both school-level supports and community-embedded services. The district also has substantial infrastructure for engaging families and connecting students to support. Its multilingual interpreters, school-based family liaisons, language-access tools, and interpreter training capacity reflect a strong foundation for multilingual family engagement and accessible communication. Somerville's formal districtwide MTSS structure provides another important foundation to support students, with core elements in place and functioning across academic and social-emotional domains.

At the same time, the district has opportunities to make these supports more consistent and equitable. Areas for growth include extending safe and supportive conditions more reliably to students with disabilities, including by strengthening bullying response processes that center affected students' voices and needs; developing communication systems that support relationship-building across schools and grade levels; and ensuring more consistent MTSS implementation across all schools.

Financial and Asset Management

Somerville's financial management has evolved meaningfully under the leadership of its chief financial officer, who has restructured the annual budget development process around standardized templates, collaborative meetings with all 36 budget departments and schools, and an equity-driven formula for distributing non-personnel funds based on school demographics. The development of a budget book and a detailed salary schedule, both firsts for the district that replaced the school committee's prior approval of a single aggregate personnel line of approximately \$93.8 million, represents significant steps toward budget transparency and informed governance and is a strength of the district. The district has also strengthened financial monitoring through a new spending dashboard and a year-to-date reporting system that gives principals and department heads ongoing visibility into remaining balances, addressing a prior pattern in which budget holders spent without consistent awareness of overruns. Within the city structure, in which the municipality owns all school buildings and provides custodial, maintenance, and capital services, the district and city are actively working to align procurement practices, and the district maintains a more independent operational footprint in technology.

The district has several areas for growth in financial and asset management. The finance office has long depended on institutional knowledge rather than written guidance, and developing and documenting standard operating procedures for core finance office functions is an area of growth. Relatedly, developing formal districtwide grant management procedures that include grant prioritization, alignment to strategic goals, and systematic compliance monitoring routines is also an area for growth. The written agreement between the city and the district has not been updated to reflect the current scope of city services provided to schools, and updating it is an area of growth. The district also lacks a documented procurement and contracting workflow aligned with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B requirements, supported by written procedures, and accessible to all relevant staff. In budgeting, the absence of a formal multiyear financial plan that is regularly presented to the school committee is an area for growth, a need underscored by unbudgeted personnel costs that followed collective bargaining. Finally, developing an internal asset tracking system to complement the city's processes and provide the district with greater independent visibility into its asset inventory and collaborating with city officials to develop and communicate a long-term capital plan that includes school buildings and meets district needs are areas for growth for the district.

Somerville 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: (a) Leadership and Governance, (b) Curriculum and Instruction, (c) Assessment, (d) Human Resources and Professional Development, (e) Student Support, and (f) Financial and Asset Management. Reviews provide the state, district leaders, and the public with an in-depth look into the systems, structures, and practices of a district and how they affect student experiences and opportunities. District reviews provide information and recommendations to support districts in implementing systemic improvements and advancing equitable student outcomes and experiences.

Methodology

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

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

Site Visit

The site visit to Somerville occurred during the week of April 6, 2026. The site visit included 23 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 95 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and a teachers' association representative. The review team conducted 5 teacher focus groups with 16 elementary school teachers, 14 middle school teachers, and 7 high school teachers; 3 focus groups with 14 middle school and 8 high school students; and 1 family focus group with 6 parents. Data

collection also included distributing a questionnaire to district leaders and principals to gather information about district and school processes and operations. Respondents in Somerville completed the district questionnaire and 11 of 11 principal questionnaires.

The site team also conducted 73 observations of classroom instruction in 11 schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol. During these observations, they also monitored classrooms for the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) as rated on CURriculum RATings by TEachers (CURATE)³ or EdReports.

District Profile

The City of Somerville is located in eastern Massachusetts and borders the cities of Arlington, Cambridge, Boston, Everett, and Medford. According to [census data](#), Somerville’s median income from 2020 to 2024 was \$132,572, which is above the state median income of \$103,960. In 2024, Somerville had an estimated 82,149 residents.

The superintendent of Somerville Public Schools is Dr. Rubén Carmona, who was appointed in July 2023. A school committee of seven members, elected for two-year terms, also governs the district.

The district served 4,876 students across its 11 schools in the 2025-2026 school year. Total enrollment has increased by 185 students since the 2020-2021 school year. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school for the 2025-2026 school year.

Table 1. Schools, Type, Grades Served, and Enrollment, 2025-2026

School	Type	Grades served	Enrollment
Capuano Early Childhood Center	Elementary	PK-1	240
Albert F. Argenziano School at Lincoln Park	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	548
Arthur D. Healey	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	461
East Somerville Community	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	743
John F. Kennedy	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	474
West Somerville Neighborhood	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	381
Winter Hill Community	Elementary/Middle	PK-8	361
Benjamin G. Brown	Elementary	K-5	230
Next Wave Junior High	Middle	7-8	11
Full Circle High School	High	9-12	60
Somerville High School	High	9-12	1,367
Total	N/A	N/A	4,876

Figure 1 shows the distribution of Somerville’s students by race/ethnicity. Figure 2 shows student makeup for selected populations as compared with state averages. In the 2025-2026 school year, 51.8 percent spoke a first language other than English, and 23.5 percent were English Learners. Full

³ CURATE: CURriculum RATings by TEachers, <https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/curate>.

enrollment figures compared with the state are in Tables D1 and D2 in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides additional information about district enrollment, student attendance, and expenditures.

Figure 1. Distribution of Students, by Race/Ethnicity (2025-2026)

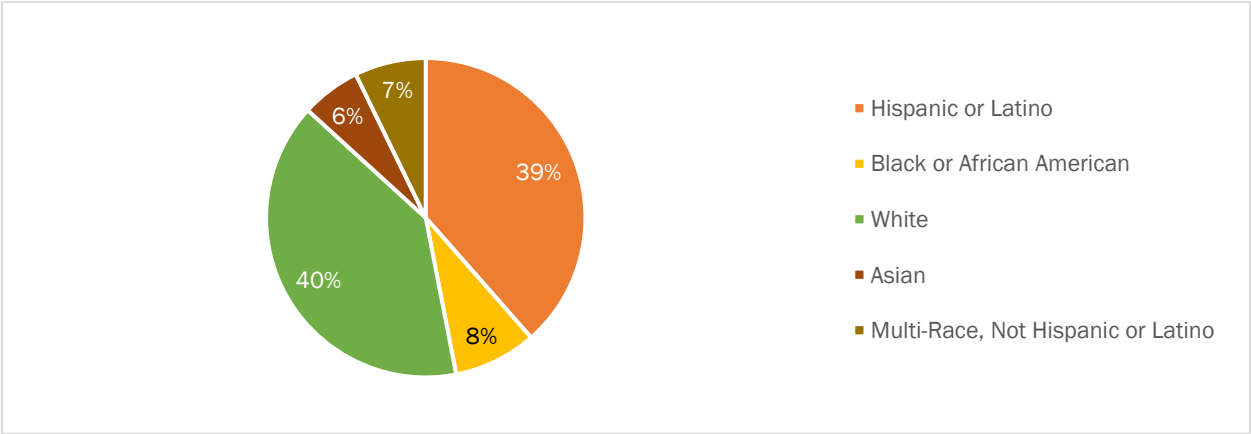


Figure 2. Distribution of Students, by Selected Populations (2025-2026)

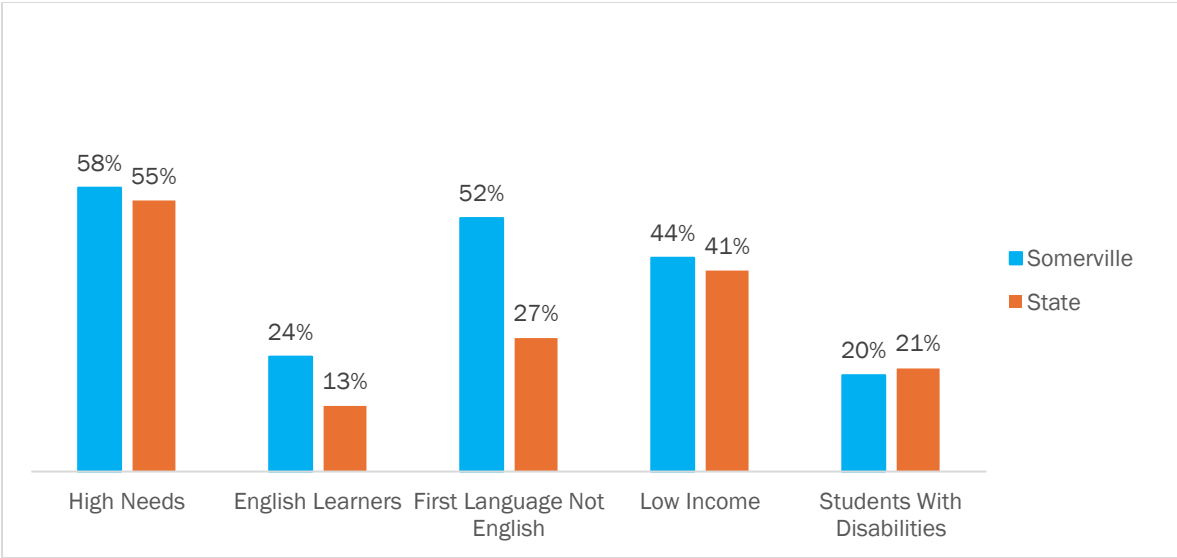
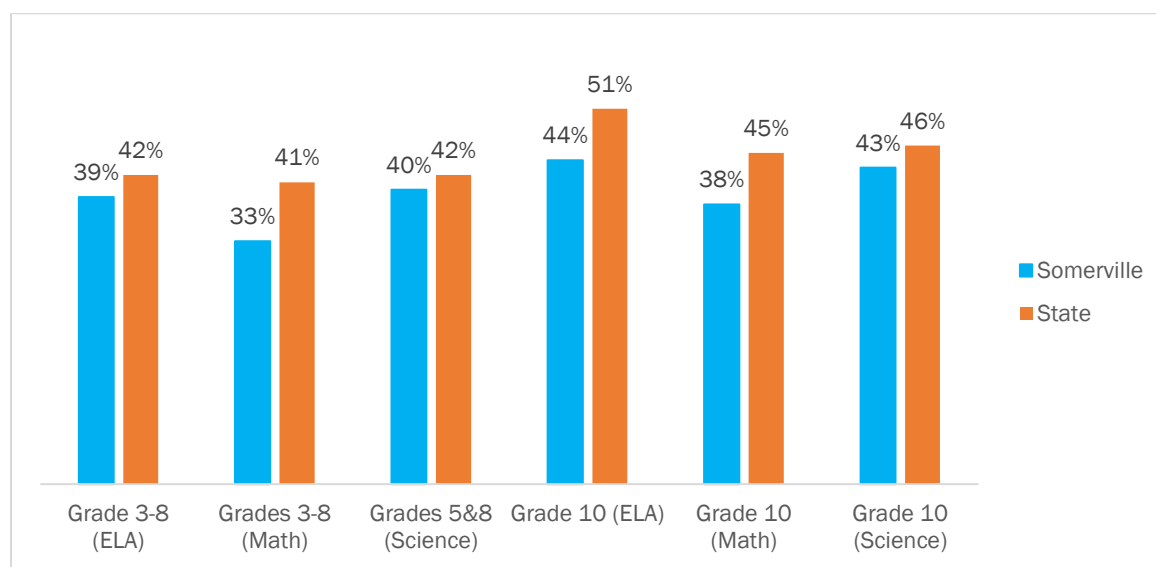


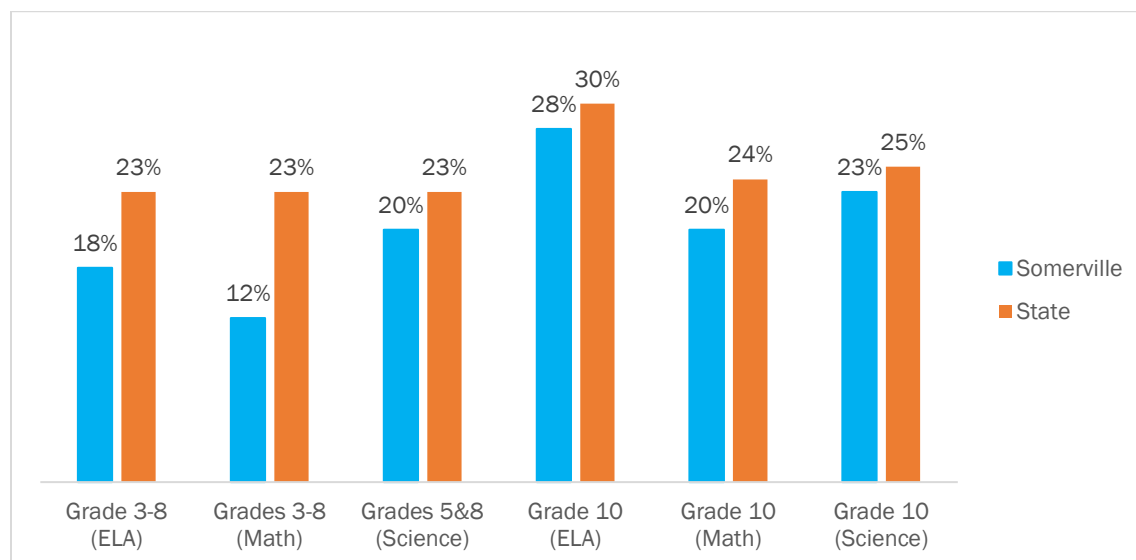
Figure 3 shows the percentage of Somerville’s students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) as compared with the statewide percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS. In 2025, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was lower for Somerville in grades 3-8 (ELA and mathematics), grades 5 and 8 (science), and grade 10 (ELA, mathematics, science) than for the state.

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, MCAS, 2025



Somerville's high needs students, who comprise 58.0 percent of the district [in 2025-2026](#), met or exceeded expectations on the 2025 MCAS assessments at rates 2 to 11 percentage points below high needs students across the state (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of High Needs Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, MCAS, 2025



Most high school students in Somerville attend Somerville High School, but the district offers an alternative setting for secondary students via the Full Circle High School. Somerville's 2025 four-year cohort graduation rate (86.1 percent) was 3.2 percentage points lower than the state rate (89.3 percent). Furthermore, the district's overall dropout rate of 2.1 percent is slightly higher than the state average of 1.8 percent and the dropout rate for Somerville's English Learners is 8.0 percent and higher than the state average of 6.5 percent for English Learners.

Of students who graduated from the district in 2023-2024, 53.2 percent went on to attend college or university by March 2025, which is less than the state rate of 63.5 percent. Additionally, 14.6 percent of 2024-2025 Somerville graduates planned on entering the workforce or an apprenticeship after high school compared with 13.8 percent of students across the state.

In 2025, in statewide accountability results, one school (Winter Hill Community) was identified as requiring assistance or intervention due to being among the lowest performing 10 percent of schools statewide. One school (West Somerville Neighborhood) was identified as requiring assistance or intervention due to low performance of its Hispanic or Latino student group; and one school (Next Wave Junior High) was identified as requiring assistance or intervention due to the low participation rate of high needs students. The district made moderate progress toward achieving its accountability targets as set by DESE.

In fiscal year 2024, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure for Somerville was \$27,410, which is \$6,873 more than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts with similar demographics (\$20,537), and \$4,867 more than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts of similar wealth (\$22,543).⁴ In-district per-pupil expenditures for Somerville were \$5,002 more than the average state in-district spending per pupil (\$22,408). Actual net school spending was greater than what is required by the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table D5 in Appendix D.

Classroom Observations

Six observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Somerville during the week of April 6, 2026. The observers conducted 73 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The observers used the CLASS protocol to guide all classroom observations in the district and used the three grade-band levels of CLASS protocols: PK-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

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

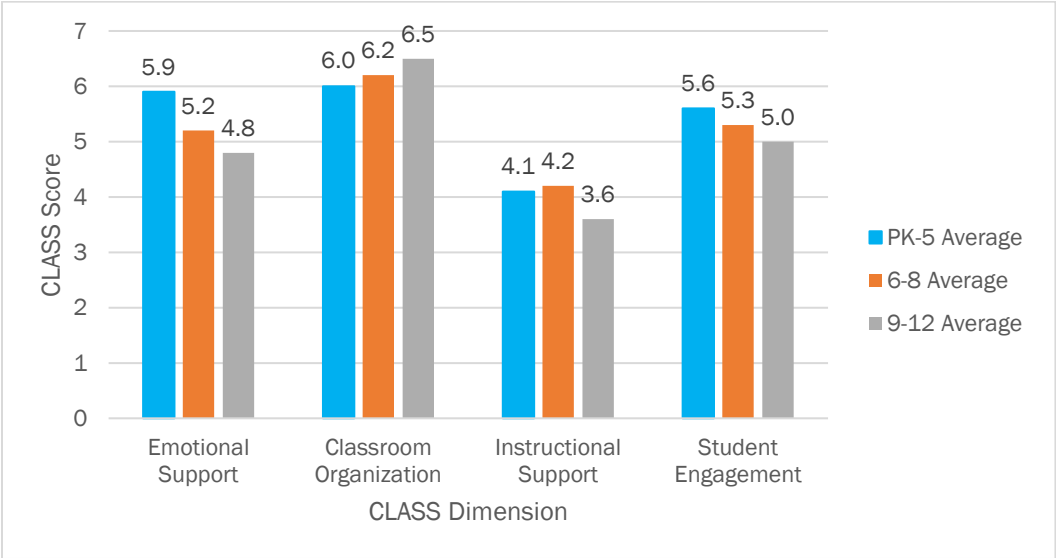
- **Emotional Support.** Describes the social-emotional functioning of the classroom, including teacher-student relationships and responsiveness to social-emotional needs.
- **Classroom Organization.** Describes the management of students' behavior, time, and attention in the classroom.
- **Instructional 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.

⁴ Districts with similar demographics and similar wealth are based on [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) (retrieved February 2025).

The observers conducted classroom visits and rated each dimension (including Student Engagement) on a scale from 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 (low range) indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 (middle range) indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating 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 Somerville, ratings are provided across three grade bands: PK-5, 6-8, and 9-12. For each grade band, ratings are provided across the overarching domains, as well as at individual dimensions within those domains. Figure 5 shows average ratings, by domain, for each grade band. The full report of findings from observations conducted in Somerville is in Appendix B, and summary results are in Tables 17, 18, and 19 in this appendix.

Figure 5. Somerville CLASS Domain Averages by Grade Band



Overall, in the PK-5 grade band, instructional observations suggest generally strong evidence of Classroom Organization, moderately strong evidence of Emotional Support and Student Engagement, and mixed evidence of consistently rigorous Instructional Support in grades 4-5. In both the 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands, instructional observations provide evidence of consistently strong Classroom Organization and mixed evidence of consistently strong Emotional Support, Student Engagement, and rigorous Instructional Support.

Leadership and Governance

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

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

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

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Leadership and Governing Structures	■ N/A	■ Increasing awareness of the SEPAC and the role it plays in supporting families of students with disabilities
Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring	■ The district uses the strategic plan as a consistent reference point across budget, SIPs, and instructional decision making. ■ The district uses a structured approach to aligning SIPs to strategic priorities, organized around measurable goals and reviewed through formal data cycles.	■ N/A
District Culture	■ The principal team has established a culture of peer learning, including regular cross-building walkthroughs and the informal exchange of tools and strategies.	■ N/A

Leadership and Governing Structures

Somerville has multiple leadership and governance structures to support district operations. Somerville is led by Superintendent Carmona, who was in his third school year in the role at the time of this review. The district's central office leadership team includes the assistant superintendent of academics; the chief financial officer; the chief personnel officer; the chief of staff; the director of communications; the director of student services; the director of special education; the director of multilingual learner education; the director of the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative (SFLC); the director of data, assessment, and accountability; and the director of equity and excellence, among others. The district also has an "Academic Cabinet" comprising members of the central office leadership team who hold instructional and student support responsibilities. At the school level,

10 principals report directly to Superintendent Carmona. The district's organizational structure, as reflected in the school year 2025-2026 organizational chart, reflects a central office with defined functional areas and direct principal access to Superintendent Carmona. In addition to the central office and school level leadership, a seven-member Somerville School Committee provides oversight for the district.

The school committee is an elected body with ward-based representation. The mayor and city council president serve in ex officio, nonvoting roles; and Superintendent Carmona serves as secretary. Students participate in school committee meetings by members of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) and provided a designated "report of student representatives" as a standing agenda item. The school committee meetings are accessible to the public, with subcommittee proceedings and minutes available for public review and opportunities for community members to provide input before policy votes. School committee members noted that the district has also instituted coordinated public office hours twice per year, during which all committee members hold open hours simultaneously throughout the city to gather community input, particularly around budget season and in the fall for broader policy and long-range planning discussions.

School committee members consistently described a positive working relationship with Superintendent Carmona, characterizing him as forthcoming, student-centered, and willing to engage directly with difficult questions at public meetings. The chief of staff plays a central coordination role in the committee relationship, preparing Superintendent Carmona for meetings, reviewing materials in advance, coordinating with individual members on significant agenda items, and staffing subcommittee meetings. The committee conducts an annual superintendent evaluation. Members described the most recent completed cycle as the most substantive since Superintendent Carmona's tenure began in July 2023. However, at least one member characterized the overall evaluation process as not yet robust or sustainable year over year, noting that the quality of the evaluation can vary significantly depending on the reviewers involved and the rigor applied in each cycle. Superintendent Carmona described several central office roles as having responsibilities that cut across traditional departmental lines.

The chief personnel officer oversees all personnel functions and contributes to district climate and strategic planning work. The SFLC director manages family and community engagement, enrollment, and out-of-school-time programming support and serves as a community outreach liaison. The chief of staff serves as a key liaison to the school committee, school-based leaders, and the superintendent's office; however, this position is being eliminated at the end of the 2025-2026 school year with responsibilities dispersed between the superintendent and other leaders. Superintendent Carmona reflected on the district's ongoing work to strengthen distributed leadership within school buildings. He described a priority around ensuring that responsibility for decisions and tasks is appropriately shared across leadership teams rather than concentrated in any single role. He connected this to a broader effort to build organizational conditions in which teams have the capacity and confidence to act within their areas of responsibility.

Principals described multiple district-level leadership structures, including a District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT), a principal team, and a broader leadership team. According to principals, school leaders are not necessarily permanent members of the DILT, with some principals reporting

participating periodically or having served on the team in prior years. Principals reported the DILT's purpose as developing and sharing district-level instructional priorities, tools, and recommendations that schools may adapt based on their own school improvement plans (SIPs). For example, one principal noted that the DILT presented several recommended projects at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, including a peer walkthrough and data collection structure that the high school adopted and implemented. In this way, principals characterized the DILT as providing a menu of district-aligned instructional structures rather than directing uniform implementation across all schools. Principals also described meeting as a collective leadership group, including monthly all-leadership meetings with assistant principals, department heads, principals, and central administration. There is also a principal team that conducts walkthroughs with the district Academic Cabinet at least monthly and sometimes every other week. Principals reported that these meetings provide opportunities to visit one another's schools, review walkthrough data, monitor implementation of HQIM, and share practices, although some principals noted that logistical agenda items can limit time for deeper collaboration.

School-based Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) are present in all schools; members include building administrators and teacher leaders. Principals said that ILTs may include assistant principals, department chairs, and content coordinators, with composition varying by school. ILTs meet on a regular basis, though frequency varies by school, with principals describing weekly, biweekly, or monthly cadences depending on context of the meeting. ILT work typically centers on instructional priorities, data review, and professional development planning. In the principal focus group, principals described ILTs as key structures for connecting district- and school-level priorities to classroom practice and for distributing leadership throughout the building.

One principal described using ILT walkthrough data in aggregate form to share with staff and to connect observation findings to upcoming professional development and to support coherence between what leaders see in classrooms and the professional learning the staff receives. Principals also described a culture of peer learning within the principal team, noting that the team regularly borrows tools and practices from one another following cross-building observations. However, principals also noted that there are not explicit districtwide expectations for ILT meeting frequency, composition, or focus, which produces variation in how ILT leadership is organized and enacted across buildings.

The district supports the convening of school-based site councils as required under Massachusetts law and maintains advisory structures, including a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and, given the size of the English Learner population, an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC). While the district has these structures in place, multiple family focus group participants reported they were unaware of the existence of the SEPAC until they took proactive steps to seek out communities of support. Several family participants felt the district could improve outreach about the existence of the SEPAC. As one parent explained, "I didn't even know that SEPAC existed until I went to one of my son's parent-teacher conference nights . . . he's been in special education the entire time. . . . That information was not widely known." Another parent added,

I saw like a little brochure in the corner in the office at an IEP [Individualized Education Program] meeting once that says SEPAC, and I had never even heard of

what that was . . . there was no information, no one had ever mentioned it to us It was kind of something I happened upon. . . . The brochure had the wrong contact information too, and it took me a long time to even figure out how to get in touch with SEPAC.

Increasing awareness of the SEPAC and the role it plays in supporting families of students with disabilities is an area of growth for the district.

District and school leaders reported that SIPs are developed in consultation with school site councils and are aligned to the district strategic plan. The SFLC provides a broader infrastructure for family and community engagement that complements advisory council work across schools, including school-based family and community liaisons at each building and multilingual support infrastructure (described further in the *Stakeholder Engagement* section).

Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

Somerville operates under a five-year Strategic Plan (2025-2030) organized around four priority areas: Academic Excellence, Equity and Access, Wellness and Joy, and Family and Community Engagement. Superintendent Carmona described the strategic plan as emerging from an entry process during his first year in the role, through which he engaged stakeholders to understand the district's needs and aspirations. District leaders reported that input for the strategic plan was gathered through focus groups; root cause analysis sessions; strategy sessions; and surveys involving students, families, staff, and community partners. Superintendent Carmona stated that all district decisions, including budget decisions, are evaluated for alignment with the strategic plan.

Principals identified the strategic plan as a guiding framework and among the top district priorities. One principal directly named the components of the strategic plan when asked about the district's highest priorities. School committee members, when describing their priorities, identified academic achievement, equity, and community engagement as central concerns, all of which are reflected in the four strategic priority areas. The fiscal year 2026 budget presentation to the school committee explicitly organized budget priorities around the four strategic plan areas, indicating that the plan functions as an organizing framework for resource allocation decisions as well as program and instructional planning. The district's use of the strategic plan as a consistent reference point across budget, SIPs, and instructional decision making is a strength of the district.

The district has a structured SIP process that requires schools to develop three-year improvement plans, including a strategic plan aligned with a priority of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals; action plans; key performance indicators; baseline data; and progress monitoring timelines. Principals and their leadership teams, in consultation with site councils, are expected to engage in collaborative data analysis and planning to produce these plans. A teachers' association representative noted attending school committee meetings at which SIP presentations are made, and this person observed at least one school in which a teacher leader presented alongside the principal.

School leaders reported that SIPs are required to address each of the four strategic priority areas, ensuring districtwide coherence across buildings. This alignment is reinforced through the district's

instructional rounds process and through data review structures that connect school-level progress monitoring to central office oversight. The district's structured approach to aligning SIPs to strategic priorities, organized around measurable goals and reviewed through formal data cycles is a strength of the district.

The district employs multiple mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of improvement priorities and assessing progress toward strategic goals. The assistant superintendent of academics described a data review infrastructure that includes monthly all-team meetings with district leaders (three meetings per year are designated as data review days timed to the close of assessment windows), a monthly Academic Cabinet meeting for central office academic leaders, ILT meetings at the school level, and the DILT. Instructional rounds, conducted approximately twice per month with principals and central office leaders, generate structured observational data on the use of HQIM and instructional practice across all schools. Observers complete a structured digital form at the end of each classroom visit, and the district tracks this data by school over time to monitor curriculum implementation trends. District staff use these data to identify strengths and areas for growth across the district and to inform professional development planning.

District Culture

District and school leaders described multiple structures intended to create shared expectations and accountability for implementing district priorities. The district leadership team functions as a vehicle for consistent communication between central office and schools, and the principal team provides a regular forum for aligning messaging and sharing implementation data across buildings. Instructional rounds, conducted jointly by principals and central office leaders, create shared accountability for curriculum implementation and instructional quality. The SIP process establishes formal expectations for schools to set measurable goals aligned to district priorities and to monitor and report on progress through regular data reviews presented to the school committee.

Superintendent Carmona acknowledged that strengthening distributed accountability within schools is an active district priority. He described a pattern in which principals and other building leaders sometimes retain responsibility for operational or implementation tasks that could be led by assistant principals, ILTs, department chairs, teacher leaders, or other members of the school leadership structure. According to Superintendent Carmona, this can happen when leaders believe they can complete the work more efficiently or effectively themselves; however, it can also limit the time principals have for higher-leverage executive leadership responsibilities, such as setting instructional direction, monitoring implementation, coaching leadership teams, and using data to guide improvement. He connected this challenge to the district's broader need to build collective efficacy and team-based ownership so that school leadership is not dependent on a single individual. District leaders described addressing this gap through ongoing systems building, including efforts to clarify roles, strengthen leadership team routines, and create conditions in which responsibility for district and school priorities is shared more consistently across buildings. Participants in several focus groups generally described the working relationships across systems as positive and collaborative. The teachers' association respondent characterized labor-management relationship as more positive than not and noted open lines of communication with Superintendent Carmona.

School committee members described strong working relationships with Superintendent Carmona at both the individual and structural levels, with members characterizing him as transparent, student-focused, and willing to address difficult questions directly in public forums. Additionally, principals described the principal team as a valuable structure that fosters collaboration and learning for school leaders. The principal team's culture of peer learning, including regular cross-building walkthroughs and the informal exchange of tools and strategies, is a strength of the district.

City government representatives described the division of responsibilities between the city and the school district, with the city managing facilities and capital assets while the school department exercises autonomy over educational programming and day-to-day operations. Some family focus group participants raised concerns about the structural implications of this relationship, noting that mayoral control over school buildings and the relatively small proportion of family representation has the potential to investment in schools. These perspectives reflect community-level questions about governance structure and resource allocation rather than concerns about current working relationships between district and city leadership.

Somerville's district leaders described leadership as largely stable within the DILT. Several members of the district's central leadership team have been in their roles for multiple years. At the time of this review, the chief of staff position was in transition, and the district also had interim appointments in the chief financial officer and the principal role at one site. The teachers' association participant noted that the district has difficulty retaining educators of color, and in particular women of color, in leadership positions, which is an area of active concern.

The district has established multiple formal and informal structures for stakeholder engagement. The strategic plan development process engages students, families, staff, and community partners through focus groups, surveys, and strategy sessions. The district administers a Conditions for Learning survey districtwide to gather student and educator perspectives on school climate, and teachers are asked to complete exit tickets following professional development sessions. The teachers' association meets monthly with senior district leadership through formal labor-management structures; the association's participant described open communication channels with Superintendent Carmona's office as an asset of the relationship.

The director of SFLC reported that the SFLC provides substantial infrastructure for family engagement. These supports include multilingual interpreters for Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole available by phone on a full-time basis, school-based family and community liaisons at each building, multilingual family materials, and a cradle-to-school pipeline of early childhood and family support programming. In school year 2024-2025, the SFLC supported 233 regular volunteers in academic and out-of-school-time programming and served more than 160 students and families through its basic needs and housing support office.

Despite these structures, one educator in a leadership role identified a gap in mechanisms for educator input into major decisions, such as the budget process, noting that teachers have no meaningful way to participate in budget development. This person described existing survey tools as primarily retrospective rather than consultative.

Recommendations

- *The district should develop and implement strategies to increase awareness of the SEPAC amongst families of students with disabilities.*

Curriculum and Instruction

This section examines the extent to which district leaders have established a shared instructional vision that is anchored in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and guides all curricular and instructional decisions toward equitable outcomes for all students. This section also focuses on the extent to which the district pairs high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and high expectations for all students with individualized supports, so that every student can engage in deeper learning and develop the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to succeed in college and/or the workplace.

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
Instructional Leadership	■ The district has developed an instructional vision that is tied to district improvement priorities. ■ The district uses district- and school-level ILTs to monitor implementation of instructional priorities.	■ Ensuring that the instructional vision is widely known and understood by all staff, and implemented in classrooms across the district
Curriculum and Instructional Materials	■ N/A	■ Developing a standardized approach for monitoring curricular implementation and instructional practices across all schools and content areas
Equitable Practices and Access	■ N/A	■ Providing the necessary infrastructure to consistently implement academic interventions
Effective Instruction and Curricular Implementation	■ N/A	■ Supporting consistent implementation of instructional practices that encourage student discourse and engagement

Instructional Leadership

The assistant superintendent of academics leads the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and reports directly to Superintendent Carmona. This position holds primary responsibility for developing the districtwide instructional vision, curriculum selection and implementation, and academic program development. The assistant superintendent oversees two grades K-8 curriculum coordinators—one responsible for humanities (ELA and social studies) and one for STEM (mathematics and science). These coordinators in turn lead curriculum review and selection processes, facilitate grade-band curriculum teams, conduct implementation walkthroughs, and coordinate professional development aligned to curriculum adoptions.

According to district leaders, Somerville has collaboratively developed a Vision for Excellent Instruction, introduced in the current school year as a living document intended to guide instructional improvement across all schools. The assistant superintendent for academics described a robust development process that outlined how the vision was co-created with input from administrators and educators during districtwide professional development, with all educator feedback collected and distilled into the final vision. The vision is organized around four interconnected priorities: positive classroom culture, student-focused planning and preparation, access to grade-level standards for all learners, and student agency and engagement. Superintendent Carmona also explained that this vision is explicitly connected to district improvement planning and priority-setting, including a stated focus on strengthening instruction through HQIM and addressing disparities for multilingual learners and students with disabilities. District leaders also tied instructional expectations to equity-focused and culturally and linguistically responsive commitments—they described routines of disaggregating data and using disparities as triggers for district learning and adjustment. The development of an instructional vision that is tied to district improvement priorities is a strength of the district.

District leaders described that this vision is being rolled out primarily through administration and school principals, along with districtwide professional development time during which educators provide feedback on the vision. Curriculum leaders explained that all professional development offerings are connected to the instructional vision. Despite these efforts, participants reported mixed clarity and coherence around the vision. Some teachers, particularly at the high school level, were less familiar with the vision as a named framework, though they described practices consistent with the district's instructional priorities. Ensuring that the instructional vision is widely known and understood by all staff, and implemented in classrooms across the district, is an area for growth for the district.

To better share the instructional vision, the district has established several structures to monitor implementation. At the district level, the DILT has defined improvement planning and monitoring mechanisms, including dashboards, walkthrough data collection, and structured collaboration time intended to support continuous improvement. Superintendent Carmona described monitoring district improvement plans (DIPs) and SIPs through a “dashboard” used to track progress toward goals in multiyear plans, and he noted he actively reviews the dashboard with a data leader. School leaders also noted that school-based ILTs are present across all schools and include building administrators and teacher leaders who represent multiple content areas. Across schools, principals described ILTs as responsible for designing and implementing professional development. They noted that professional development is aligned to SIPs and the district instructional vision. The composition and meeting frequency of ILTs varies by school, with some principals describing broad representation and regular convening, and others noting that small staff size requires them to conduct ILT-equivalent work with the whole staff. The use of district- and school-level ILTs to monitor implementation of instructional priorities is a strength of the district.

The assistant superintendent also reported that classroom observations are conducted twice a month with principals, after which observers complete a Google Form to record strengths and areas for growth related to the priorities outlined in the instructional vision. This data is aggregated over time and can be isolated by school, thus providing district leadership with a running record of trends.

The DILT developed and shared a peer walkthrough data collection protocol with school ILTs, which at least one school adopted and implemented with fidelity in the current school year.

The district is also leveraging its partnership with TNTP through DESE's targeted assistance work and connecting the accountability status of one school to benefit all schools in the district. This partnership includes participation in TNTP's Learning Acceleration Network, through which walkthroughs are conducted across all district schools, and goals for curriculum implementation are set and monitored. The district has extended these improvement efforts districtwide to schools with formal accountability designations, reflecting a commitment to using external support to accelerate progress across all buildings.

Despite this infrastructure, evidence from multiple sources indicates that monitoring expectations are not yet consistently enacted across all schools. Principals confirmed that there is no overarching district prescription for how building-level walkthroughs must be conducted, how frequently, or how feedback should be documented; and that building leaders have autonomy to develop systems suited to their school context. While this autonomy allows for school-level customization, it also produces variation in the consistency of instructional monitoring and feedback practices across buildings.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Somerville has established a structured, multiyear process for reviewing and selecting HQIM. The process is led by two grade K-8 curriculum coordinators, one who oversees ELA and social studies and one who oversees STEM (mathematics and science). They convene content-specific leadership teams (e.g., literacy leadership team, math curriculum implementation team) that includes educators, administrators, coaches, and leaders who represent multilingual learners and special education. Each process begins with a vision statement grounded in the DIP, core values, and Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; these serve as the anchor for evaluating materials. Teams then use EdReports and CURATE to screen candidates and require materials to meet a defined quality threshold before advancing to a piloting phase.

Teachers also reported broad stakeholder involvement through feedback processes in Common Planning Time (CPT), curriculum committees, and a robust piloting process. For example, middle school ELA teachers noted that they were actively involved and compensated for their participation in the Fish Tank selection process. Middle school science teachers also described their involvement in the current search and pilot process for a new middle school science curriculum. Some middle school teachers acknowledged that the ELA selection felt expedited compared with the more extended science piloting process. High school teachers, however, described a more uneven picture of their involvement in curriculum review and selection. Some high school ELA teachers noted that a recent curriculum review of the existing curricula to ensure alignment produced a structured scope and sequence with shared high-priority standards, but teachers in mathematics and science reported no comparable formal process in recent memory.

Table 4 summarizes the status of all districtwide curricula being used in Somerville.

Table 4. Summary of Districtwide Curricula Being Used

Grade Level(s)	Subject	Curriculum	Type	CURATE Rating	EdReports Rating
3-4	ELA	Wit and Wisdom	Comprehensive	ME	ME
5-8	ELA	Fishtank PLUS	Comprehensive	NR	PM
9-12	ELA	Teacher-developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
K-5	Math	Illustrative Math (2 nd Edition)	Comprehensive	PM	ME
6-8	Math	Illustrative Math (IM 360)	Comprehensive	ME	ME
9-12	Math	Illustrative Math – adapted	Comprehensive	ME	ME
6-8	Social Studies	Investigating History	Comprehensive	NR	NR
6-8	Science	OpenSciEd	Comprehensive	PM	ME
6-8	Science	Amplify	Comprehensive	PM	ME

Note. CURATE = CURriculum RATings by TEachers; ME = Meets Expectations; NR = Not Rated; PM = Partially Meets Expectations. Investigating History is DESE-developed or -informed.

The district has made substantial progress toward adoption of HQIM across core content areas in grades K-8, following a period of limited curricular coherence post-pandemic. In ELA, grades 3-4 implemented Wit and Wisdom in the current school year; grades K-2 are slated to adopt Wit and Wisdom in the following school year; and grades 5-8 are in their second year of Fish Tank. District-created curriculum and a structured literacy routine are currently in place. In mathematics, Illustrative Mathematics is established in grades 6-8, and was adopted in grades K-5 in the current year. Science and social studies present a more varied picture: middle school science teachers are piloting materials (i.e., Amplify and OpenSciEd) with a selection pending; social studies teachers at the middle school rely on Investigating History that is supplemented with teacher-developed materials. At the high school level, greater variation exists, with ELA teachers describing a recently reviewed and structured scope and sequence, though most departments rely heavily on teacher-developed materials, with school leaders naming specific curricula only in mathematics.

Teacher focus groups reflected a range of experiences with recently adopted materials. Middle school ELA and math teachers broadly affirmed the value of common materials, noting that shared curriculum supports student transitions across schools and reduces variability in what students are taught. Teachers also described the implementation of new, content-rich curricula as demanding, with some specialists noting that the pace and volume of simultaneous adoptions leave teachers insufficient time to fully analyze and respond to student data. Given the difficulties that some teachers described, principals reported a multilayered approach to monitoring HQIM implementation. The district uses cross-school instructional rounds during which administrators complete a Google Form indicating the level of evidence of HQIM use in each classroom observed (i.e., strong evidence, some evidence, or no evidence), with data accumulated over more than a year to track trends within and across schools. Curriculum coordinators conduct their own walkthroughs focused on specific curricula, and the Learning Acceleration Network provides external walkthrough support for literacy materials in participating schools.

Principals acknowledged that while ELA implementation monitoring is well-established, mathematics monitoring is less systematic and uses a less standardized rubric. One elementary school principal noted that in both science and social studies, the absence of HQIM in some grades makes it difficult to hold teachers to consistent implementation expectations. Developing a standardized approach for monitoring curricular implementation and instructional practices across all schools and content areas is an area for growth.

Equitable Practices and Access

The district has established a tiered academic intervention framework aligned to its Vision for Excellent Instruction. Tier 1 consists of high-quality core curriculum delivered to all students. Tier 2 targeted supports are delivered primarily through X-Block, a built-in period within the instructional day in grades 1-8 designed to provide targeted support without disrupting students' access to the general education curriculum. Students also engage with personalized learning software during this time. Tier 3 intensive supports are provided by reading or math intervention specialists, typically in smaller groups outside of the general education classroom. However, one student support staff member did report that the district "does not have as robust math intervention" compared with the reading interventions. District documents indicate that X-Block currently focuses primarily on literacy and mathematics remediation, with the district actively working to expand capacity to also provide enrichment for students who need it. X-block is also implemented at the high school level, but both teachers and students described the time as more of a study hall than a time for interventions. Tier 2 and 3 interventions at the high school include the Reaching Independence Through Structure and Education (RISE) program, for students with social-emotional, academic, and behavioral needs; and the Bridge program, for students transitioning back from a long absence. Student support staff noted that intervention services are often responsive to immediate needs but are constrained by staffing, time, and scheduling, limiting the ability to provide consistent, preventative interventions across all grades. Providing the necessary infrastructure to consistently implement academic interventions is an area for growth for the district.

District leaders described equity as a core organizing principle in curriculum selection and instructional decision making. The assistant superintendent, who previously served as the district's first director of equity, described the deliberate design of curriculum review teams to include special educators and the director of multilingual learner education, centering the needs of students with disabilities and multilingual learners from the outset of the selection process. The district also described a continuous expectation to review disaggregated data across demographic lines, with outcome disparities framed as signals of what the district needs to do differently rather than reflections of student capacity. Professional development requirements reinforce this. District human resources representatives explained that Year 2 educators complete a sequence on culturally responsive teaching, and Year 3 educators complete professional development focused on supporting multilingual learners.

Additionally, the district operates several multilingual learner programs across schools, including Sheltered English Immersion, dual language (UNIDOS, at East School), and newcomer/students of limited or interrupted formal education programs at multiple levels. District documents indicate an ongoing investment in expanding English as a Second Language (ESL) services, with new ESL teachers added across multiple schools in recent years. The district's current priority for multilingual

learner education centers is to strengthen effective language development practices across all classrooms and grade levels. Multilingual Learner Parent Advisory Council meetings provide a structure for building leadership capacity among multilingual learner families, and the district is expanding pathways for staff to obtain ESL licensure and bilingual endorsements. Students with disabilities are primarily served in general education classrooms, with inclusion being the dominant model, according to both specialists and student support staff. Students are also supported via push-in and pull-out services, when necessary, primarily into small groups for literacy or math. Life skills classrooms can serve students in grades K-8 as well as a behavioral program (Social and Educational Enrichment at Kennedy, aka SEEK) or intensive support programs such as Specialized Kennedy Intensive Program (SKIP) and Specialized High School Intensive Program (SHIP). Teachers and support staff reported that staffing constraints have reduced the availability of these sub-separate programs.

Family focus group participants raised concerns about the consistency and individualization of special education services, particularly regarding placement decisions and the degree to which services match student profiles. Some families described challenges in navigating the referral process and noted that outcomes for students with similar profiles can vary significantly. District documents indicate that specialized programs for students with disabilities are distributed across schools and that families have been provided with program profiles describing expected supports. While teachers and family members acknowledged the availability of programs and services, some described challenges related to communication and consistency of implementation.

Somerville offers access to a range of coursework, including advanced and elective options, particularly at the secondary level. Principals and teachers described efforts to encourage broader participation in advanced coursework and to reduce gatekeeping practices, which students described as prior tracking, limited guidance, or lack of awareness of options. High school teachers described a meaningful range of academic pathways and advanced coursework available to students, including Advanced Placement (AP), Honors for All, and multiple college-level options. The Honors for All model reflects an intentional effort to broaden access to honors-level coursework beyond historically tracked populations. ELA teachers noted three senior-year pathways specific to the content area, which are AP Language and Composition, a Syracuse University dual enrollment offering, and an Academic English and Composition course aligned to Bunker Hill Community College. High school students also reported there are several Career Technical Education programs available, including in health careers, early childhood education, carpentry, and electrical. Teachers described the curriculum review process in ELA as producing a vertically aligned scope and sequence intended to ensure skills build progressively from grade 9 through grade 12. In other content areas, the absence of a comparable curriculum review process may limit the district's ability to ensure equivalent rigor and coherence across all departments.

Effective Instruction and Curricular Implementation

During the week of April 6, 2026, certified observers conducted 73 classroom observations across 10 schools using CLASS, with a focus primarily on literacy, ELA, and mathematics instruction in grades PK-12. The following summary draws on CLASS observation findings and stakeholder perspectives gathered during focus groups and interviews.

Classroom observations revealed teachers were clearly using HQIM in 23 percent of all classrooms observed. These rates varied by grade level: teachers were clearly using HQIM in 35 percent of elementary (grades PK-5) classrooms observed, in 33 percent of middle school (grades 6-8) classrooms observed, and in 0 percent of high school classrooms (grades 9-12) observed. These rates varied by content; teachers were clearly using HQIM in 38 percent of ELA lessons or classrooms observed and in 42 percent of mathematics lessons or classrooms observed.

Across student and teacher focus groups, participants reported that many classrooms foster positive relationships and a generally supportive learning climate, though experiences vary by school and classroom. CLASS observation data (on a scale of 1 to 7) showed strong results in the Emotional Support domain across grade spans. The districtwide average for Positive Climate was 5.9 across grades PK-5, with Teacher Sensitivity averaging 6.3 and Negative Climate averaging 6.9. Across grades 6-8, Positive Climate averaged 5.6, and secondary classrooms similarly reflected warm, respectful teacher-student interactions (see Appendix B for score breakdown). These results indicate that classrooms across the district are generally positive, supportive environments in which students feel seen and respected by their teachers and have a meaningful foundation for deeper instructional work. This is also aligned to the priority of positive classroom environment in the district instructional vision. The scores also align with evidence from students, who described their teachers as caring, approachable, and willing to provide help. One student explained, “I feel like this school is really good with communication and making sure . . . that they can help you.” Teachers corroborated that relationship building and student engagement are instructional priorities, particularly in middle and high school settings, where teachers emphasized knowing students well and encouraging participation through discussion-based strategies.

District leaders, principals, and teachers described several systems intended to support curricular implementation, including CPT, coaching, and professional development aligned to adopted curricula. District curriculum coordinators and academic coaches provide structured support for teachers who are implementing new curricula. The district employs five grades K-8 academic coaches who support curriculum implementation at the school level, and curriculum coordinators lead grade-band walkthroughs focused on specific programs. The district’s Culture of Data framework provides explicit guidance for teachers and school leaders on using data to guide coaching, professional learning, and intervention decisions, and on aligning instructional improvement efforts to the Vision for Excellent Instruction. District documentation and data from the curriculum leaders indicated that CPT is built into schedules and is intended to support collaborative planning, data review, and curriculum adaptation. However, specialists noted limited collective time to analyze data and plan instructional responses.

Teachers described using district-adopted curricula as the foundation for instruction, particularly in ELA and math, while also adapting lessons to meet student needs. Teachers reported implementing instructional practices such as whole-group instruction, small-group work, discussion, and independent practice. CLASS scores for Instructional Learning Formats averaged 5.5 in grades PK-5, reflecting classrooms in which teachers frequently used varied approaches to engage students. Grades 6-8 and 9-12 showed somewhat lower but still middle-range scores on Instructional Learning Formats (5.1 for both), suggesting there are opportunities to increase variety and cognitive engagement in upper-grade settings. Evidence from student focus groups highlights similar mixed

instructional practices, with students reporting experiencing a range of approaches. Some described engaging lessons with discussion, group work, and clear expectations; others described instruction that felt repetitive or heavily worksheet-based, depending on the class. Additionally, overall CLASS scores in Content Understanding (average 4.4), Instructional Dialogue (average 3.9), and Analysis and Inquiry (average 2.7) indicated that while some classrooms featured substantive academic discussion, many were characterized by teacher-directed exchanges with limited back-and-forth. These findings are consistent with district leaders' own descriptions of student agency, academic discourse, and students doing more of the cognitive work as areas of active and ongoing instructional focus. Supporting consistent implementation of instructional practices that encourage student discourse and engagement is an area of growth for the district.

Recommendations

- *The district should work with its instructional leaders to widely disseminate its instructional vision amongst its staff and to embed it throughout the district.*
- *The district should build upon its successes in monitoring ELA instruction and implement a consistent walkthrough tool and protocols for use across other subjects.*
- *To the extent possible, the district should adjust its staffing levels and schedules to ensure that schools have the time and personnel necessary to consistently implement academic interventions for students who need them.*
- *The district should partner with its teachers to increase the consistency with which they incorporate opportunities for challenging tasks throughout each lesson, such as asking questions that prompt higher-order thinking, facilitating extended content-related dialogue, scaffolding tasks, and actively encouraging academic persistence.*

For related resources, see Appendix C.

Assessment

This section examines the extent to which the district supports a robust, data-centered culture through strategic data and assessment systems that advance equitable student experiences and outcomes. It also focuses on the extent to which the district collects an array of data and uses it to inform decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. This section shows how educators in the district analyze assessment results and other data to develop an understanding of the whole student, examine trends across student groups, and adjust their instruction accordingly.

Table 5 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in assessment in Somerville.

Table 5. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Assessment Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Data Collection	■ The district has established a robust infrastructure for equity-focused decision making, which includes disaggregating student outcome data and embedding subgroup performance monitoring into school improvement planning processes.	■ N/A
Data Use and Culture	■ The district's vision for data use is consistently articulated across district-level and school-level leadership. ■ The district combines universal access to an integrated data platform and embedded coaching support.	■ Providing classroom educators with clearer guidance on how to translate data analysis into specific instructional next steps
Sharing Data	■ The district has adopted a multilingual family communication platform.	■ Ensuring more consistent, proactive, timely, and accessible communication about student performance across all schools and teachers, with particular attention to the communication needs of multilingual families ■ Developing common expectations for grading practices to provide students and families with clearer, more consistent signals of student progress

Data Collection

The assistant superintendent of academics is responsible for assessment in the district. This position receives support from the director of data, assessment, and accountability. The district employs a broad range of academic and nonacademic data sources to monitor student learning and inform instructional decisions.

Somerville uses a combination of academic and nonacademic data sources to monitor student learning and inform decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. District leaders described triangulating state assessment results, district benchmark measures, and classroom-based data to develop a comprehensive picture of student performance. District leaders reported that at multiple points throughout the year MCAS results, including achievement levels, student growth percentiles, and item-level data, are used in combination with i-Ready diagnostics and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data to track student mastery of grade-level standards. The Open Architects platform, introduced to all educators in the district during school year 2025-2026, further consolidates academic, social-emotional, and attendance data in a unified interface that allows disaggregation by a wide range of student characteristics. In the school leadership focus group, principals reported regularly reviewing assessment data at the school level to identify trends and guide leadership conversations and professional learning. Teachers across elementary and middle school grade spans confirmed they monitor student progress and adjust instruction by drawing on a mix of formal and informal data sources, including curriculum-embedded assessments, unit tests, quizzes, and observational data. High school teachers described relying on classroom assessments and student work samples as their primary sources of day-to-day performance information. Stakeholders broadly agreed that multiple data sources are available and regularly used, though teachers noted that in practice they tend to use data that is more classroom-driven than district-wide. Table 6 outlines the standardized assessments used districtwide.

Table 6. Assessments Used in Somerville

Assessment	Grade(s)	Time of administration
PELI (Preschool Early Literacy Indicator)	PK (4-year-olds)	Three times per year (fall, winter, spring)
ESI-3 (Early Screening Inventory)	PK, Kindergarten	Annual (early fall)
DIBELS 8 (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)	Grades K-5	Three times per year (fall, winter, spring); additional progress monitoring for students below benchmark (biweekly)
i-Ready Diagnostic (Reading & Mathematics)	Grades 3-8	Three times per year (fall, winter, spring)
Attendance Data	Grades PK-12	Ongoing (reviewed monthly)
Behavioral/Referral Data	Grades PK-12	Ongoing (reviewed monthly)

The district has developed an assessment strategy intended to align with its adopted curricula and instructional priorities, particularly in ELA and mathematics. District leaders described using curriculum-embedded assessments as a primary mechanism for gauging student understanding and informing instruction, with the district's published assessment calendar serving as the organizing structure for districtwide administration windows. District leadership confirmed that assessment expectations are communicated through guidance documents and professional development, with an emphasis on using results during CPT to support collaborative instructional planning. Middle school teachers specifically noted the i-Ready platform, administered three times per year, as providing immediately usable, actionable data aligned with district goals of closing literacy and

mathematics gaps. Teachers confirmed that assessments embedded within district-adopted curricula are regularly used and discussed during CPT. However, teachers also noted variability in assessment practices across schools and grade levels, particularly in subjects in which the district has not yet adopted a common curriculum. In these areas, assessment tools are frequently teacher-developed, resulting in inconsistent expectations and uneven comparability across classrooms.

Equity-focused data analysis is an explicit district priority, and district leaders described systematic practices for disaggregating assessment results by student group, including English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, and students by race and ethnicity. District leadership highlighted the Open Architects platform as a key tool for this work, noting its capacity to disaggregate performance data by any combination of demographic characteristics and to track trends over time. The district's SIP process reinforces this commitment by requiring schools to document baseline subgroup performance data, establish measurable goals tied to each strategic priority area, and monitor progress through regular data reviews across the year. The district has established a robust infrastructure for equity-focused decision making, which is a strength of the district, by routinely disaggregating student outcome data and embedding subgroup performance monitoring into school improvement planning processes.

Principals described reviewing subgroup data to guide school-level discussions about instructional supports, interventions, and resource allocation, and noted that equity-oriented data analysis is integrated into leadership meeting structures. Teachers acknowledged that they are aware of student subgroup performance data and described reviewing disaggregated results in some CPT sessions. However, many teachers reported limited time and insufficient structures to engage in sustained, in-depth, equity-focused analysis on a regular basis. Some teachers noted that although data clearly show disparities in student outcomes, they need more time and more consistent support from instructional coaches to translate those findings into targeted instructional plans for students who need additional support.

Data Use and Culture

District leaders articulated a clear and consistent vision for data as a tool for improvement, equity, and strategic decision making. A review of the district's strategic plan explicitly identifies data-driven decision making as a core value, and this language was echoed across multiple stakeholder groups. Superintendent Carmona described regularly triangulating multiple data sources, including state assessment results, district benchmarks, and school-level indicators, to inform district priorities and monitor progress, particularly for multilingual learners and students with disabilities. District leadership reinforced that data is used to guide strategic conversations about disparities and systemic improvement rather than to evaluate individual educators. The consistency with which this vision for data use is articulated across district-level and school-level leadership is a strength of the district.

Principals described the district's expectations around data use as clearly communicated through leadership structures, and they noted that data conversations are a standard component of both building leadership meetings and districtwide forums. In teacher focus groups, teachers generally understood that assessment data are intended to inform instruction, although several expressed

uncertainty about how the district's broader data vision translates into specific, concrete expectations at the classroom level. When discussing challenges teachers have in translating the vision into classroom practice, one teacher stated, "There's some expectations, but then it's like, 'What do we do with it?' We set our goals in September, and we have our own assessments throughout the department that we track teacher by teacher and by grade level." Providing teachers with clearer guidance on how to translate data analysis into specific instructional next steps remains an area for growth.

District leaders reported that data use is embedded in the district's strategic planning and continuous improvement processes. District leaders described reviewing data dashboards and progress indicators tied to district-level improvement goals and using results to adjust strategies over time. The assistant superintendent of academics noted that the SIP process formalizes this connection by requiring each school to identify goals aligned to the strategic plan, document baseline performance data by student group, and establish monitoring plans that include regular data reviews across the school year. Central office academic leaders convene a monthly "Academic Cabinet," which includes a structured data review component. District leaders reported that DILT meetings begin with a data dive to reflect on a systemwide expectation that data inform leadership decision making. Principals described engaging regularly with data during school-level planning, including reviewing assessment trends and discussing progress toward goals, in both leadership and grade-level team meetings. Teachers reported concerns regarding applying the district's data vision to their classroom data practice, and that connections between district-level improvement goals and their own classroom data use are not always made explicit. Teacher focus group participants noted this limits their understanding of how conversations on team data feed into SIPs and the DIP.

The district has invested in building educator access to data systems and developing data literacy through professional learning and embedded supports. According to district leaders, all educators were trained on Open Architects during 2025-2026 school year, and all CPT leaders received targeted training on the platform as well. The platform provides access to MCAS, i-Ready, DIBELS, attendance, behavioral, and social-emotional data in a unified dashboard, and allows users to disaggregate results by a wide range of student demographic and program characteristics. Some teachers described productive CPT sessions in which Open Architects was used to (a) analyze trends, (b) identify instructional focus areas, and (c) plan next steps. Teachers noted that instructional coaches were an important support in facilitating these conversations. The combination of universal access to an integrated data platform and embedded coaching support is a strength for the district.

At the same time, teachers across grade levels described meaningful variation in their comfort level and capacity for data analysis. They also noted that CPT alone is insufficient for the depth of analysis needed to consistently move from data observation to instructional response. District leaders acknowledged variation, noting that the amount of CPT dedicated to data use differs widely across teams and schools. District leaders noted that they have worked to establish structured data review routines at multiple levels, including CPT and at grade-level team meetings, school leadership meetings, the Academic Cabinet, and student support conferences. Principals and district leaders described using these structures to identify students who need additional support, monitor their progress toward goals, and inform instructional adjustments. Student support staff confirmed that data is used to coordinate services and respond to emerging student needs. Nevertheless, teachers

reported that while data review structures are in place, the extent to which data discussions lead to concrete instructional changes varies considerably by team and school. Some teachers described using CPT to review data to adjust groupings, revisit unmastered skills, or target specific standards in upcoming units. Others reported that data conversations remain more descriptive than action-oriented due to limited time and competing priorities. This concern, noted earlier, continued to be voiced by teachers when they explained their challenges in translating student-level data into instructional actions.

Sharing Data

District leaders reported that teachers are expected not only to use data internally to guide instruction and planning, but also to share performance information clearly and equitably with students, families, and other stakeholders. Students across focus groups reported receiving information about their academic performance primarily through grades, assignments, and teacher feedback, although they also reported that the clarity and usefulness of this communication varied considerably by grade level. High school students described checking online grade portals and receiving assignment-level feedback as their primary sources of performance information. Middle school students reported learning about their progress through grades and teacher comments, and some noted that teachers who explicitly explain expectations or offer opportunities for revision are particularly helpful in making performance data meaningful to them. Teachers confirmed that sharing assessment results and progress information with students is a regular part of instruction, and some teachers confirmed that they provide structured, individualized communication about progress and next steps.

However, feedback quality and clarity vary significantly by teacher. Students reported that it is not always possible to know if they are meeting expectations, let alone understand how to improve. One middle school student noted: “Most classes, teachers say, check your grades on Aspen to see how you’re doing, and if you need help, go talk to them.” Families described multiple channels for receiving information about their children’s academic performance, including an online portal, quarterly report cards, parent-teacher conferences, email communications, and direct teacher outreach. Some families reported positive experiences, noting that teachers proactively communicate concerns and progress updates (see Family and Community Partnerships). Additionally, the district has adopted Talking Points, a digital communication tool that allows for ongoing multilingual communication between educators and families. This reflects a meaningful commitment to language accessibility for families of multilingual learners. Therefore, the district’s adoption of a multilingual family communication platform is a strength.

Principals confirmed that schools have established expectations for teacher communication with families, particularly when students are having trouble. However, families described inconsistencies in communication practices, with some reporting difficulty understanding grading systems or navigating the online portal to access academic data. In focus groups, families of multilingual learners raised concerns about the timeliness and accessibility of information in their home languages. Ensuring more consistent, proactive, and timely accessible communication about student performance across all schools and teachers, with particular attention to the communication needs of multilingual families, is an area for growth.

Teachers across grade levels described grading as the primary mechanism for summarizing and communicating student performance. Some teachers, particularly at the elementary level, incorporate standards-based or skill-focused feedback alongside traditional grades. Some high school departments have developed common assessments that support internal alignment around performance expectations.

Grading practices vary considerably across classrooms and schools, and students reported confusion about what grades represent or how they are calculated, particularly when different teachers apply different criteria and weighting schemes. Some families echoed these concerns, noting that grading systems are not always transparent or easy to interpret. Developing common expectations for grading practices to provide students and families with clearer, more consistent signals of student progress is an area for growth for the district.

Recommendations

- *The district should work with its instructional leaders and teachers to identify concrete ways in which its data vision can be translated into daily practice and should provide professional learning opportunities around using data to inform and adjust instructional strategies.*
- *The district should review and strengthen communication expectations and implementation across schools to ensure that all families—particularly multilingual families—receive timely, accessible, and consistent information about student performance and understand how to access and interpret academic information.*
- *The district should work with its instructional leaders and teachers to develop and implement consistent grading expectations across grade levels and subject areas.*

Human Resources and Professional Development

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

Table 7 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in Human Resources (HR) and professional development in Somerville.

Table 7. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Human Resources and Professional Development Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies, and Practices	The district has regularly scheduled meetings and a collaborative relationship with union leadership.	Continuing the transition to a more fully integrated and accessible HR information system
Staffing	N/A	- Developing a more systematic approach to data-informed, needs-based educator assignment - Consistently completing administrator evaluations within the required timeframe - Updating the administrator evaluation process to include two to four district or school improvement SMART goals and progress toward them - Monitoring working conditions with particular attention to the retention of a diverse workforce and to educator workload
Professional Learning	- The district uses a tiered, alignment-focused professional development structure. - The district invests in both distributed collaboration structures and leader development. - The district uses a comprehensive induction and mentoring program, which pairs all new educators with trained mentors and provides structured support across multiple years.	- Clarifying guidance to administrators and coaches about expectations for conducting observations and providing meaningful, actionable feedback to teachers - Ensuring that common planning time is consistently relevant, structured, and productive for educators

Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies, and Practices

Somerville maintains a centralized personnel structure with defined roles covering the full arc of the employment lifecycle. The personnel team includes a chief personnel officer, an assistant director of HR, an HR generalist, and an HR specialist, all of whom collectively manage recruitment, hiring, onboarding, licensure verification, development, mentoring, and labor relations. One district leader described the personnel team's scope as encompassing not only traditional HR functions but also a broader talent strategy "aimed at making the district the best possible place to work." The district maintains a documented onboarding workflow, updated in January 2025, that coordinates responsibilities across HR, payroll, technology, and educator development, and uses automated triggers in PowerSchool to initiate the process upon hiring candidates.

At the time of the review, district leaders described an 18-month effort to develop a custom HR information system designed to consolidate multiple internal spreadsheets into a single platform, with the goal of giving both employees and school leaders direct access to accurate and current staffing data. The teachers' association representative noted staff challenges with the consistency and usability of some HR functions. The association president reported that while formal procedures exist, staff must email payroll to learn salary information and responses have not always been timely. District HR leaders reported the new system was approximately two weeks from launch at the time of this review. The absence of employee self-service access to payroll and salary information currently requires staff to email the payroll department, which is housed under finance rather than HR. A teachers' association participant reported that responses have not always been timely from the finance department. School leaders who need staffing information by role or subject area must currently contact HR directly because the spreadsheet-based system does not support independent queries. Continuing the transition to a more fully integrated and accessible HR information system is an area for growth for the district.

Document review revealed the district has formal written personnel policies in place and maintains established procedures for managing grievances, labor relations, and employment records. All collective bargaining agreements include a formal grievance process, and both the teachers' association participant and HR staff confirmed that the district follows that process, and that the majority of disputes are resolved informally before reaching formal filings. According to district leaders, there are monthly labor-management meetings with Superintendent Carmona, the assistant superintendent, and union leadership. According to district leadership, the association (a) meets monthly with Superintendent Carmona, the assistant superintendent, and the chief of staff in a formal labor-management meeting, (b) meets weekly with the chief personnel officer on personnel matters, and (c) meets biweekly with the chief of staff on facilities and strategic planning. District leaders described maintaining strong labor relations that have kept formal grievances limited, with only two grievances filed in the prior school year. The newly negotiated collective bargaining agreement includes a Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) educator retention clause that commits the district to hiring and retaining a workforce that reflects the demographics of Somerville's students and to exploring financial incentives for Somerville graduates who return to work in the district. The district's regularly scheduled meetings and collaborative relationship with union leadership is a strength.

When asked about the process for storing personnel records, HR focus group participants reported that personnel records are maintained in a hybrid system, with older paper files stored in locked cabinets and more recent information housed across several electronic platforms. Employees may inspect or request copies of their personnel files with advance notice.

Staffing

The personnel team leads the district's centralized recruitment and onboarding, with school administrators leading candidate searches and HR managing the posting, background checks, licensure verification, and appointment processing. HR staff described providing hiring administrators with process guidelines and guardrails while preserving building-level autonomy in candidate selection. Principals identified recruiting and supporting staff as a clear district priority. The district's talent strategy, articulated in budget presentations and district planning documents, organizes its personnel goals around five pillars: recruitment, hiring and onboarding, retention, development and support, and advancement and recognition.

In the HR focus group, staff described the process the district uses for hiring. Staff reported that vacancies are posted primarily through SchoolSpring, which is integrated with the PowerSchool suite already in use across the district, with supplemental postings on broader platforms such as Indeed for hard-to-fill or leadership positions. Hiring administrators submit posting requests to HR, which verifies budget alignment before publishing. HR leaders also reported that formal policies govern credential verification, with the assistant director of HR reviewing the educator licensure of all candidates through the DESE portal prior to hire.

District leaders reported that the district is developing more systematic approaches to educator assignment across buildings, but these systems are not yet fully operational. District leaders described active conversations about how to allocate resources per building and how to ensure that staffing patterns reflect both student need and educator strength. Superintendent Carmona acknowledged that the district does not yet have formal processes to review whether its strongest educators are equitably distributed across school improvement contexts, though this is an identified area of focus. At the school level, staffing assignments are shaped by programmatic structures such as ILTs, which include teachers, counselors, and specialists. Elementary teachers noted significant variation in classroom composition, including differences in the numbers of multilingual learners and students with disabilities across classrooms within the same school, which affects instructional demands in ways that are not always addressed in current assignment structures. Developing a more systematic approach to data-informed, needs-based educator assignment is an area for growth for the district.

District leaders reported they support teacher evaluation and instructional improvement through several mechanisms. Leaders noted they have established shared expectations for high-quality instruction and using regular evidence-gathering structures to monitor implementation. Through instructional rounds, classroom walkthroughs, and structured review of instructional practice, leaders identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth across schools. These processes are connected to the district's vision for excellent instruction and are used to inform coaching conversations and professional learning. In the school leadership focus group, principals also reported supporting the evaluation process through walkthroughs and coaching conversations but

also noted there is not a single districtwide model they must follow and they sometimes struggle to find the time to provide feedback effectively.

District records suggest that teacher evaluations are consistently uploaded to PowerSchool and administrator records are preserved by hand. Table 8 shows findings from a review of these records.

Table 8. Summary of Educator Evaluation Records Review

Category	Component	Teachers	Administrators
General	Number of Evaluations Selected for Review	25	53
General	Summative Evaluation Available	22/25	33/53
SMART Goals	Included Student Learning SMART Goal	21/22	33/33
SMART Goals	Progress Toward Student Learning SMART Goal Evaluated	21/22	26/33
SMART Goals	Included Professional Practice SMART Goal	21/22	33/33
SMART Goals	Progress Toward Professional Practice SMART Goal Evaluated	22/22	33/33
SMART Goals	2-4 School or District Improvement SMART Goals (admin only)	N/A	0/33
SMART Goals	Progress Toward School Improvement SMART Goals Evaluated	N/A	1/33
Evidence	Included Multiple Sources of Evidence for Each Standard	21/22	33/33
Ratings	Included Ratings for Each Standard	22/22	33/33
Ratings	Included Overall Rating	22/22	33/33
Feedback	Contained Feedback on Each Standard	21/22	25/33
Feedback	Contained Positive Feedback	22/22	29/33
Feedback	Contained Constructive Feedback	15/22	19/33

Note. SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound, NA = not available.

District records show that teacher evaluations are completed in PowerSchool. AIR randomly selected 25 teachers who were due for a summative evaluation for the 2024-2025 school year. Of those, 22 (88 percent) had a summative evaluation available for review. Among the available evaluations, 21 of 22 (95 percent) included ratings for each standard and an overall rating. In addition, 21 of 22 (95 percent) included a student learning SMART goal with documented progress, and 21 of 22 (95 percent) included a professional practice SMART goal with documented progress.

Further, 21 of 22 (95 percent) teacher evaluations included multiple sources of evidence, such as observations, student work samples, or other documentation supporting progress toward student learning goals, professional practice goals, standards, and indicators. All (22) evaluations reviewed included feedback; nearly all (21) provided feedback on each standard, while one included written feedback only on the overall rating. All evaluations included positive written feedback while only 15 of 22 (68 percent) included constructive feedback.

District records also show that administrator evaluations are also completed in PowerSchool. However, of the 53 administrators due for a summative evaluation for the 2024-2025 school year, only 33 (62 percent) were available for review. The review further indicated that several administrators had completed some evaluation activities, including goal-setting forms and evidence submissions, but still did not have a completed evaluation available for review. Therefore, consistently completing administrator evaluations within the required timeframe, in alignment with state regulations, is an area for growth.

Of the available administrator evaluations, most included required components, but were missing some of the recommended components. 26 of 33 (79 percent) included student learning SMART goals with documented progress, and 33 of 33 (100 percent) included professional practice SMART goals with documented progress. However, none of the evaluations included two or more district or school improvement goals and progress toward them, a recommended element. Only one evaluation included one school or district improvement SMART goal with documented progress. Currently, Somerville's goal-setting and summative evaluation forms for administrators do not include space to document a school improvement goal and progress toward it, which reflects a misalignment between the district's processes and the Massachusetts Model Evaluation System. Therefore, updating the administrator evaluation process to include two to four district or school improvement SMART goals and progress toward them is an area for growth.

The district provides educators with leadership and advancement opportunities that allow them to grow while remaining connected to the classroom. Educators may apply annually for ILT positions, which include stipends; ILTs are available across schools and are open to teachers, counselors, and specialists. The district has developed a distributed educator leadership model that maps roles such as mentor, CPT leader, and curriculum leader. The district also funds an administrator licensure pathway for a small number of educators each year, with the aim of advancing the district's equity goals through in-house selection. District leaders noted, however, that the same educators tend to fill the leadership roles, and that the number of advancement positions does not always keep pace with the number of educators the district has invested in preparing for leadership.

District staff reported an educator retention rate of 87 percent in 2026. HR staff noted that roughly 60 percent of the workforce sits at the top step of the salary schedule, indicating the faculty are substantially mid-career to late career educators who remained in the district over time. The teachers' association participant attributed much of this stability to the strength of the collective bargaining agreement and to a constructive labor-management relationship, pointing to recently negotiated salary gains and contract provisions. This includes a clause committing the district to BIPOC recruiting and to retaining a workforce that reflects the demographics of Somerville. According to the association participant, the contract itself is a meaningful reason educators stay.

At the same time, stakeholders identified conditions associated with attrition risk. A teachers' association representative reported that when educators do leave, it is rarely because of the students or the work of teaching itself, but more often because of concerns about supervision. This person also noted that the district has struggled to retain educators of color, and women of color in leadership roles in particular—an equity dimension of retention that the aggregate retention rate does not capture. Middle school teachers separately described workload concerns tied to the

demands of simultaneously implementing new curricula across multiple content areas. They noted that available planning and collaboration time does not always match the level of effort that work requires. Monitoring working conditions with particular attention to the retention of a diverse workforce and to educator workload are areas for growth for the district.

Educators also identified meaningful challenges in current working conditions. The teachers' association participant reported that some educators perceive supervision and evaluation practices as inconsistent across buildings, and that this perception, whether it reflects actual practice, can erode trust over time. Teachers described the cumulative weight of high instructional expectations, multiple simultaneous curriculum implementations, and collaboration time that is not always well-matched to their instructional needs.

Professional Learning

The director of educator development leads professional learning in Somerville. The district organizes this work around four interrelated structures: observation and feedback grounded in the district's Vision for Excellent Instruction, a tiered calendar of professional development offerings, weekly common planning time, and a multiyear induction and mentoring program for educators new to the district.

District leaders identified observation and feedback as a shared responsibility of the personnel team and of principals in their role as instructional leaders, anchored by the district's Vision for Excellent Instruction. According to district leaders, this framework is intended to guide coaching conversations, classroom observations, and professional learning across all school levels. District academic leadership participates in instructional rounds and has engaged external partners to support observation practice connected to the implementation of HQIM. Principals described coaching teachers and providing them with valuable feedback as a primary district priority.

Despite this shared framework, the structure and consistency of observation and feedback vary across buildings. Principals retain substantial discretion over how coaching and feedback are organized within their schools, and the assistant superintendent of academics reported monitoring the impact of that work primarily through conversations with individual principals rather than through a common districtwide system. As a result, the frequency, format, and follow-up of observation cycles are not consistent across school contexts. Clarifying guidance to administrators and coaches about expectations for conducting observations and providing meaningful, actionable feedback to teachers is an area for growth for the district.

District leaders reported that professional learning in Somerville is comprehensive and closely aligned with district priorities. A review of district documents revealed that professional development is organized through a tiered calendar that distinguishes among districtwide sessions, department sessions, and school-based sessions. Districtwide professional development, offered quarterly and coordinated by district academic leadership, is aligned to districtwide instructional priorities. Department sessions, organized by grade band or content area and held several times per year, allow for more targeted, role-specific learning. According to school leaders, school-based sessions, held on early release Wednesdays, are determined by each school's principal and ILT. These are expected to align to the SIP, which, in turn, reflects the DIP. The director of educator development

noted that the district requires that all professional development, including choice offerings proposed by educator facilitators, demonstrate alignment to the Vision for Excellent Instruction as a condition of approval. The district's tiered, alignment-focused professional development structure is a strength of the district.

The district's 2025-2026 professional development catalog reflects a broad range of offerings connected to current instructional and student support priorities, including CPT leader training, clinical supervision for counselors, restorative community practices, social-emotional and behavioral health screener training, and multilingual learner instructional practices. Professional learning tied directly to curriculum implementation, including structured literacy approaches for grades K-2 educators and Illustrative Math support across grade levels, has been embedded into the calendar. Teachers across focus groups confirmed that professional development is generally purposeful and connected to their instructional work, and the teachers' association participant characterized the choice catalog as robust, noting that educators both facilitate sessions for colleagues and learn from outside experts.

At the same time, teachers reported that the demands of simultaneous curriculum implementation across multiple content areas often exceed what scheduled professional development can fully address, requiring educators to do significant additional preparation and adaptation on their own time. Teachers also noted that professional development is sometimes organized for groups that do not share the same instructional context, reducing its relevance for individual participants. The district gathers some feedback through post-session exit tickets and an annual Conditions Learning survey, but it does not yet have a systematic process for using that input to adjust offerings over the course of the year. According to district leaders, the district has built structured collaboration time into the school calendar through a contractual early release every Wednesday, with CPT sessions of approximately 90 minutes complemented by school-based and departmental professional development across the year. Common planning time rotates between (a) primary groupings, in which educators meet with their building grade-level teams and service providers, and (b) secondary groupings, in which educators meet with grade-level colleagues from across the district. According to the teacher association president, CPT is teacher driven. As he reported in a focus group, "We actually fought for it to be educator driven in the contract. There should be some collaboration with the principal for the building base grade level team ones. But there is opportunity for the educator to set the agenda." District leaders reported that educators submit agendas in advance and, by contract, drive the focus of these sessions, while administrators circulate to offer support. To strengthen the quality of this time, the district offers a 12-hour training course for prospective CPT leaders; educators who complete it enter a pool of eligible leaders for subsequent years. The district's investment in both distributed collaboration structures and leader development is a strength of the district.

Despite this structure, educators raised consistent concerns about the practical value of CPT. One teacher reported that CPT during the current year had not been highly leveraged in her practice, citing a session relevant to only a small fraction of those present. She noted, "Last week we had a CPT . . . that there were fifteen of us in the room, and it was relevant to two teachers." Co-teaching partners in some cases reported having no shared planning time at all, leaving them to coordinate informally and outside the school day. Superintendent Carmona acknowledged observing CPT

sessions in which the time was not used in ways aligned to instructional improvement; he identified this as a challenge requiring attention to both structure and facilitation. Ensuring that common planning time is consistently relevant, structured, and productive for educators is an area of growth for the district.

The district maintains a structured induction and mentoring program for educators new to Somerville. All new educators are paired with a trained mentor for their first year through this formal program, which is supported by a written mentoring agreement outlining responsibilities for the mentor (who receives a stipend), the new educator, the principal, and a mentor coordinator. As reported by HR staff and confirmed through a district document review, mentors must hold professional teacher status, have earned proficient or higher ratings on their three most recent evaluations, and complete Somerville Public School mentor training before serving. The first year of support for new teachers includes a coaching cycle focused on management and routines, a new educator orientation held before the school year begins, and in-person visits from mentor coordinators at the start of the second quarter. In Years 2 and 3, new educators can continue with one-on-one mentoring, participate in a professional learning community or affinity group, or complete the Skillful Teacher course through Research for Better Teaching. The program culminates in a professional status achievement celebration. The district's comprehensive induction and mentoring program, which pairs all new educators with trained mentors and provides structured support across multiple years, is a strength of the district.

Recommendations

- *The district should continue its transition to an integrated HR information system that is easily accessible and that securely stores staffing data and provides direct access to personnel records.*
- *The district should critically evaluate its existing approach to educator assignment and develop protocols to support equitable teacher assignment and classroom composition within and across its schools.*
- *The district must align its administrator evaluation process with regulatory requirements to ensure that all evaluations (both formative and summative) are completed within the year in which they are due.*
- *The district should include two to four district or school improvement SMART goals and document progress toward them in all administrator evaluations, in alignment with the Massachusetts Model Evaluation System.*
- *The district should proactively monitor disaggregated staffing data and take action to mitigate conditions that contribute to teacher and leadership attrition, educator workloads, and retention of employees of color.*
- *The district should issue clear guidance to administrators and coaches regarding expectations for conducting instructional observations and providing meaningful feedback to educators.*
- *The district should engage its CPT leaders in restructuring the CPT schedules and protocols to prioritize relevant groupings and structured agendas that maximize collaboration time and effectiveness.*

For related resources, see Appendix C.

Student Support

This section focuses on the extent to which the district supports the whole student by creating safe and supportive environments, meeting students' health and well-being needs, and engaging all families. It also focuses on the extent to which these supports are built on a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that flexibly assesses and addresses each student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs.

Table 9 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in student support in Somerville.

Table 9. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Student Support Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture	- The district has established systems and supports for fostering a safe and supportive learning environment through social-emotional learning and restorative justice practices. - The district focuses on nonpunitive engagement, attendance strategies, and regular analysis of attendance data.	Extending safe and supportive conditions equitably to students with disabilities, including strengthening bullying response processes that center affected students' voices and needs
Health and Well-Being	The district demonstrates a commitment to student mental and behavioral health by offering school-level and community-embedded supports.	N/A
Family and Community Partnerships	- The district has instituted intentional structures to support multilingual family engagement and language access, including multilingual interpreters, school-based family liaisons, language-access tools, and interpreter training capacity. - The district has established multiple community partnerships to meet the needs of students and families. - Wraparound services are intentional and community-focused.	Developing communication systems that support relationship-building, authentic partnerships between educators and families across all schools and grade levels
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	The district has a formal, districtwide MTSS structure with core elements in place and functioning.	Implementing MTSS consistently across all schools

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

The director of student services and the director of special education lead student supports. District leaders reported that Somerville has made significant and sustained investments in building safe,

supportive, and inclusive school environments for all students. According to the district leaders, the district's approach reflects an intentional layering of behavioral systems, restorative practices, and social-emotional learning, and is directly tied to measurable improvements in student conduct data. Across stakeholder groups, reviewers found evidence of coherent district-level infrastructure, but also inconsistency in how students and families experience those conditions.

To support a safe and supportive learning environment, district student support leaders described a comprehensive Tier 1 infrastructure for supporting the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students. These supports include social-emotional learning specialists embedded in all grades PK-8 buildings, deans and social workers in all schools, student support teams, child study teams, and a clearly articulated tiered intervention sequence. These structures are supported by Second Step, the district's social-emotional curriculum in grades PK-8. Second Step includes dedicated bullying-awareness lessons delivered each October and community circle lessons grounded in restorative justice principles. A review of the district's tiered intervention documentation found that the district makes Tier 1 expectations explicit by organizing Tier 1 supports that include schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative justice circles, responsive classroom practices, school counseling, and culturally responsive curriculum. These supports are clearly documented, structured, and accessible to all educators. Reports from district leaders, corroborated in the district's fiscal year 2026 budget presentation to the school committee, indicate that conduct referrals have declined by 18 percent to 20 percent over the past several years, a trend they attribute to the strength of social-emotional learning and restorative justice practices. The district's systems and supports for fostering a safe and supportive learning environment through social-emotional learning and restorative justice practices is a strength of the district.

School-based student support staff at the high school described building-level practices that align with the district's student support priorities, describing four student communities organized to support connection and belonging, including a dedicated community for multilingual learners and newcomers. Staff described (a) biweekly community meetings to identify and discuss students of concern, (b) embedded Cambridge Health Alliance services such as Behavioral Health Clinic and outpatient services, and (c) a mediation program that includes peer mediation as students advance through the grades. Principals also reported using climate data, including the Conditions for Learning survey and conduct referrals, to understand school culture and student needs. High school students described accessible support spaces, including RISE, and identified specific adults they could go to for help. Middle school students similarly identified school counselors as key supports for academic or personal concerns.

At the same time, some family focus group participants reported that not all students experience the school environment as consistently safe and supportive. In particular, several families of students with disabilities shared concerns related to social-emotional safety, the effectiveness of bullying response processes, and whether students with disabilities consistently experience dignity and respect in daily school settings. For example, one family participant described their child as not feeling emotionally safe at school, while another expressed concern that the response to a bullying incident did not sufficiently incorporate the affected student's perspective. These perspectives suggest an opportunity for the district to continue strengthening efforts to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, experience safe, supportive, and inclusive learning

environments. Extending safe and supportive conditions equitably to students with disabilities, including strengthening bullying response processes that center affected students' voices and needs, is an area for growth for the district.

According to district student support leaders, the district has established systems for monitoring attendance and integrating attendance data into student support processes at multiple levels. District leaders described attendance as part of the comprehensive data reviewed through the MTSS framework, with Aspen and Open Architects used to track chronic absenteeism alongside conduct referrals and social-emotional indicators. High school community teams, consisting of teachers, counselors, and specialists, meet biweekly to discuss students of concern, and attendance is consistently included as one of the data points reviewed. Superintendent Carmona described attendance as one of the indicators he reviews directly when meeting with principals, along with behavioral data and curriculum implementation progress. According to district leaders, the district's approach to attendance is oriented toward understanding underlying causes rather than defaulting to punitive responses. District student support staff described that student support teams examine whether attendance issues may reflect anxiety, avoidance of academic difficulty, or other nonacademic stressors before recommending interventions. Similarly, school-based support staff described being called into cases when attendance challenges are linked to broader student stressors. At least one high school student attributed their improved school attendance directly to access to a trusted adult in the building. These practices reflect a whole-child orientation to attendance that is consistent with the district's broader student support philosophy. The focus on nonpunitive engagement, attendance strategies, and regular analysis of attendance data is a strength of the district.

School leaders and staff members reported there are multiple formal and informal structures for student voice and leadership across the district. Principals described districtwide use of the Conditions for Learning survey as a mechanism for collecting student perspectives. They also identified school-level student government groups and informal focus groups as additional structures for gathering student voice. In some schools, principals highlighted the Somerville Education Action Team partnership with Harvard's Graduate School of Education, through which students investigate a problem of practice, interview peers, and present findings to staff and school leaders. At Somerville High School, an active student council plans school events, dances, and community service activities, and student council members described their role as an opportunity to communicate directly what students want to see happen in their school. School-based support staff noted that students are trained as peer mediators, which represents another structured leadership role connected to the school's climate and restorative practices. Students also reported that clubs are an opportunity for student voice and leadership, with one student noting, "There are many opportunities to start clubs or add something new." Another high school student, serving on student council, described helping create school expectations; this student also acts as a peer mentor for incoming students, and reflected on putting meaningful and multidimensional student leadership into practice.

Health and Well-Being

Somerville has an extensive and well-staffed infrastructure for student mental and behavioral health, which represents a notable area of investment in the district. The evidence across district-based and

school-based sources consistently reflects a tiered, community-informed approach to well-being, with the district's strategic plan identifying "Wellness and Joy" as one of four districtwide priorities. Somerville uses the HealthSmart curriculum throughout all schools, as well as Second Step for social-emotional learning in grades K-8. Students at the high school are required to take one health or physical education course each year. The high school also offers physical enrichment opportunities before and after school, such as badminton club, pickleball club, dance, and fitness. Evidence from student support staff and teachers indicates that health-related supports are embedded within the district's student support structures. District student support leaders described student support teams that include the school nurse, the assistant principal, dean, social worker, counselor, and special education representative; this reflects an integrated model in which health professionals participate in individual student support planning. District staff also noted that individual healthcare plans may need to be converted into 504 plans, and they noted that additional training on compliance is planned. This reflects the district's attention on the intersection of health needs and formal accommodation processes. At the high school, school-based support staff described an embedded Cambridge Health Alliance teen clinic at which students can access a therapist or health provider. Staff also described referral pathways to outside providers as part of the school's tiered support structure.

District student support leaders identified students' social-emotional and mental health as a core departmental priority, and described a building-level support group in each school that includes social-emotional learning coaches, a social worker, student support teams, community meetings, child study teams, and a Tier 1-Tier 3 intervention system. Tier 1 universal supports include the Second Step social-emotional learning curriculum in grades PK-8, restorative justice and community circle practices, Responsive Classroom frameworks, and a classroom management model with established expectations. The district's tiered intervention map documents these structures explicitly and they are accessible to educators across the system.

School-based staff at the high school corroborated the depth of this infrastructure, describing Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports that include (a) a therapeutic classroom program (RISE) for students needing combined social-emotional and academic support, (b) school adjustment counselors, (c) an embedded teen health clinic through Cambridge Health Alliance with substance use counseling, individual counseling, and group counseling, (d) Becoming a Man and Working on Womanhood groups, and (e) mediation and peer mediation services. District leaders have also expanded external therapy access by contracting with Riverside Community Care, Home for Little Wanderers, and Neighborhood Counseling and Community Services, structuring those agreements to remove insurance as a barrier to services. Additionally, the district piloted a universal social-emotional and behavioral health screener in several schools in collaboration with Boston Children's Hospital, with plans to scale the screener districtwide and use resulting data to strengthen tiered interventions. One district leader noted that the amount and depth of social-emotional programming in the district exceeded what they had encountered in comparable settings. The district's commitment to student mental and behavioral health by offering school-level and community-embedded supports is a strength of the district.

However, district and school-based staff also identified areas in which the MTSS remains incomplete. School-based staff described a gap in direct, classroom-based social-emotional learning

instruction at the high school level, noting that individualized counseling is occurring but that systematic Tier 1 social-emotional learning delivery comparable to the grades PK-8 Second Step implementation has not yet been established.

Family and Community Partnerships

Somerville offers several opportunities for family engagement and community partnership, primarily through the SFLC, a district-housed structure that coordinates multilingual services, enrollment, school-based liaisons, early childhood programming, and basic needs and housing support.

The district's family engagement infrastructure is among its more visible and documented investments. Superintendent Carmona identified family and community engagement as a district priority and described SFLC as a strong system for family support, although also acknowledging that communication gaps remain. School-based student support staff described that the SFLC houses the enrollment office; a team of full-time equivalent (FTE) multilingual interpreters for Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole; and an early childhood team. The TalkingPoints platform enables two-way messaging in families' preferred languages, and Aspen tracks family language preferences to support communication planning. School-based liaisons are present in every school, with larger schools staffed at 1.5 FTEs, and liaison staff were described by various stakeholders as multicultural and language-matched to the populations they serve. In fiscal year 2025, the district expanded its local interpreter pool and became a certified interpreter and translator training center, which reflects a deepening institutional commitment to language access. Together, the district's multilingual interpreters, school-based family liaisons, language-access tools, and interpreter training capacity form an intentional family engagement system, which is a strength of the district.

Despite these structural investments, multiple stakeholders described unevenness in family communication. Family focus group participants described routine communication structures such as report cards and parent-teacher conferences as present but of limited guidance, with several families noting minimal written feedback on report cards, short conference windows, and difficulty interpreting grading information. School-based staff at Somerville High School characterized family engagement as an area for improvement because communication often relies on TalkingPoints messaging rather than relationship-based phone or in-person conversations. One staff member noted, "I don't think [teachers are] picking up the phone and having actual conversations with families. That's a really great way to build relationships, but I don't think that's happening overall as a school building." Staff also reported that parent-teacher conference scheduling does not accommodate families whose work hours conflict with school dismissal. Parents described these organizations as functioning with varying strength across schools, with some schools offering more active and visible family partnership opportunities than others. Developing communication systems that support authentic partnerships between educators and families across all schools and grade levels is an area for growth for the district.

The district has developed a broad network of community partnerships serving students and families across academic, health, enrichment, and basic needs domains. School-based student support staff described partnerships with Cambridge Health Alliance, Bunker Hill Community College, a Harvard Emerging Leaders program, multiple workforce and trades organizations through Career and Technical Education, Somerville Parks and Recreation, the Mayor's Office summer jobs program, and

EnRoot for first-generation and immigrant students. A review of district budget presentations revealed documented partnerships with dozens of higher education institutions, city agencies, health and mental health providers, cultural organizations, and youth-serving nonprofits. One school-based staff member noted that the list of active partnerships “could go on and on.” These opportunities reflect the breadth and diversity of the district’s collaborative network. The director of the SFCL coordinates family outreach, enrollment, community engagement, and out-of-school-time coordination, which reflects district-level attention to organizing this work. The establishment of multiple community partnerships to meet the needs of students and families is a strength of the district.

However, the district has yet to establish a districtwide process for evaluating whether partnerships are meeting student needs or for ensuring equitable access to partnership resources across schools. Staff described the partnership landscape as collaborative and expansive but without a systematic evaluation mechanism. Superintendent Carmona and school-based staff both noted that communication gaps remain, and that helping families know what resources exist is a constant challenge.

The district provides a set of wraparound supports for students and families facing basic needs and socioeconomic challenges, organized in part through SFLC. That office connects families with resources related to housing stability, food access, immigrant affairs, and hygiene and clothing supplies, including seasonal clothing and backpack distributions through Cradles to Crayons. Family focus group participants confirmed they knew of these services, with several describing school-based liaisons as helpful for food security, housing access, and school transitions. The early childhood team in SFLC extends outreach to families before children enter the school system through a home visiting program and multilingual playgroups, which shows proactive cradle-to-school pipeline orientation. The intentional design and community focus of these wraparound services is a strength of the district.

School-based staff described the process of identifying students in need and making referrals as generally accessible with few barriers on the school side. However, staff described meaningful challenges in family engagement with services, including limited responses from families and cultural variation in families’ comfort with disclosing needs and accepting support. School-based staff and family participants both acknowledged that disclosure can feel stigmatizing for some families, particularly around mental health and basic needs, and that building trust over time is often necessary before families engage with available supports.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Somerville has established an MTSS framework that spans Academic and Social-Emotional domains, with defined team structures, tiered intervention documentation, and a growing emphasis on data use to drive support decisions. Evidence across district- and school-based sources reflects that the foundational elements of MTSS are in place and actively used.

District student support leaders described a districtwide MTSS framework that includes grades K-8 student support teams (SSTs), child study teams (CSTs), and weekly high school community meetings. Leaders described the high school structure as distinct from the grades K-8 model, with

community meetings reviewing academic, behavioral, and social-emotional data together. Grade K-8 CSTs and SSTs operate with overlapping but differentiated foci, with CSTs centered on academic needs and SSTs centered on addressing social-emotional and behavioral concerns. One district leader stated that “the whole MTSS umbrella is up and running” with a clear Tier 1 through Tier 3 intervention system. School-based support staff at Somerville High School described a recently revised MTSS document developed with support from Boston Children’s Hospital that includes a written Tier 1 guide with explicit step-by-step action steps for how teachers can respond to behavioral concerns. The district’s tiered intervention map further documents the full spectrum of supports from universal Tier 1 practices to Tier 3 intensive and crisis interventions, providing educators with a visible and accessible framework. District SST leaders described Tier 1 behavioral and social-emotional supports as including restorative justice and community circles, social-emotional learning specialists, social workers, and clear expectations for teacher responses before escalation. Tier 2 emotional learning interventions include specialized programs, related service providers, and efforts to support students with IEPs, 504 plans, and multilingual learner needs at the grades K-8 level. At the high school level, school-based student support staff identified the RISE program as a therapeutic and academic support intervention and cited embedded school-based therapy, school adjustment counselors, and Bridge as examples of more intensive supports.

Multiple sources confirmed the presence and use of these structures and teams. Specialists described CST meetings as the most meaningful data review process in the school. Teachers, administrators, counselors, and support specialists convene to review student data and set intervention targets, then return in six weeks to assess progress and determine next steps. District curriculum leadership described the district’s MTSS specialist as attending CST meetings across all schools during the current year to identify strengths, clarify team composition and agenda expectations, and work to standardize the cadence and quality of the process across buildings. A partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital provides external support for strengthening tiered systems across both Academic and Social-Emotional domains. Stakeholders consistently reported that the district has a formal, districtwide MTSS structure with core elements in place and functioning, which is a strength of the district.

Evidence from focus groups and interviews shows that the district has MTSS implementation guidance, but that the district is still developing the guidance and it is not uniformly enacted. District SST leaders said the district has trained teachers on the Tier 1 to Tier 3 intervention system, included MTSS in new teacher onboarding, and offered a professional development catalog to build staff capacity. District curriculum leadership described using a variety of data for screening and progress monitoring as part of the MTSS structure. Staff noted the use of DIBELS for literacy, Number Sense for math, and progress monitoring for students working with reading specialists and interventionists. District SST leaders reported using MCAS, i-Ready, and DIBELS data to identify areas of growth and need as well as to inform their support decisions. Specialists and teachers, however, described variability in the degree to which assessment data effectively drives intervention decisions. The district administers a wide range of assessments, including DIBELS, i-Ready, and curriculum-embedded tools, although multiple stakeholders reported that SSTs have limited time to collectively analyze data and make actionable instructional decisions. Despite these constraints, participants across focus groups identified CST meetings as the most meaningful forum for synthesizing multiple sources of student data. During these meetings, staff set and monitor

intervention goals; they then schedule follow-up discussions approximately every six weeks to assess students' responses to interventions.

Teachers and school support staff also reported the use of Aspen and Open Architects as primary platforms for tracking attendance, conduct, and student support documentation, and the district plans to expand training on consistent documentation practices across SST members.

According to district leaders and school staff, the district has created scheduling structures to support interventions, even though they also described implementation as inconsistent. District curriculum leadership described X-Block as a districtwide scheduling feature that provides targeted intervention or acceleration (see *Equitable Practices*), and district SST leaders cited weekly community meetings and grades K–8 team structures as recurring opportunities to coordinate supports. School-based SST staff described semester-based referral processes for programs such as RISE. However, district curriculum leadership and district SST leaders both cautioned that these supports are stronger in some schools than others, and suggest that scheduling structures exist but are not implemented with equity across the district.

District leaders reported that the district has taken steps to ensure that MTSS supports students with disabilities and multilingual learners rather than replaces or delays their specialized services. District SST leaders described inclusive-practices review work, a pilot co-teaching model in two grades K-8 schools, specialized programs for students with disabilities, and plans for additional Universal Design for Learning training. School principals also noted that some school ILTs include counselors, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, equity specialists, social-emotional learning specialists, and, in some cases, district multilingual learner staff who serve in advisory roles. District leaders described revising the conduct code to clarify language for more consistent behavioral data and to support more accurate identification and monitoring of students across tiers.

Despite these investments, stakeholders across roles consistently described implementation as uneven or still developing. District leaders reported that Tier 1 needs strengthening across the district, with some schools implementing supports well while others are still developing their structures. As noted in *Health and Well-Being*, Somerville High School does not currently implement a Tier 1 SEL curriculum. One school-based staff member described MTSS documentation and supports as “a work in progress” and another reported that, “our Tier 1 is something that needs to be looked at and strengthened across the district.” District leaders also acknowledged that Universal Design for Learning implementation is inconsistent across schools and that equity of access to tiered supports varies by setting.

Principals offered multiple accounts of how the district integrates school-level MTSS structures, which challenges the ideas that district technical assistance reliably matches school-identified needs with structures. Consistent MTSS implementation across all schools is an area for growth for the district.

Recommendations

- *The district should examine the factors contributing to inconsistent experiences of safety and support among students with disabilities and strengthen bullying response protocols and practices to center the voices and experiences of affected students.*
- *The district should work with its school leaders to set and model expectations for consistent and relationship-centered family engagement that goes beyond information sharing and focus on meaningful partnerships with families to support students.*
- *The district should engage school leaders and instructional leadership teams in consistently implementing and monitoring its MTSS framework across school buildings.*

For related resources, see Appendix C.

Financial and Asset Management

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

Table 10 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management in Somerville.

Table 10. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure	N/A	- Developing and documenting SOPs for core finance office functions - Updating the written agreement between the city and school district detailing the current scope of the city's services provided to schools
Budgeting and Budget Process	- The development of a budget book and salary by cost center report, both firsts for the district, represent significant steps toward budget transparency and informed governance. - The district is implementing a new, equity-driven approach to budget allocation across its schools.	- Developing formal districtwide grant management SOPs that include grant prioritization, alignment to strategic goals, and systematic compliance monitoring routines - Developing a formal multiyear financial plan that is regularly presented to the school committee
Operations	N/A	Creating a documented procurement and contracting workflow aligned with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B requirements, supported by written procedures, and accessible to all relevant staff
Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning	N/A	- Developing an internal asset tracking system to complement the city's processes and provide the district with greater independent visibility into its asset inventory - Collaborating with city leaders to establish and communicate a long-term capital plan for school facilities

Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure

Somerville's finance office, referred to internally as the FIN team, is led by the chief financial officer (CFO). The current CFO joined the district in May 2024 as a superintendent fellow before being named to the CFO position in 2025. The team includes a deputy finance officer, a payroll manager, two payroll coordinators, an accounts manager, two accounts specialists, a procurement and contract specialist, and a part-time grants manager. There is also a part-time director of operations who primarily supports Superintendent Carmona and the school committee by drafting employment contracts. The structure covers the core business office functions of budget development, payroll, accounts payable, procurement and contracting, and grants management.

The CFO indicated that he holds initial certification as a school business official, which he obtained in fall 2025 through the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials program. However, he noted that his team does not include certified accountants, and that most staff have advanced into finance roles through the clerical union rather than through formal financial credentials. At the time of the review, the CFO described himself as still in the process of understanding how current staff were performing in their roles before making decisions about additional hiring.

The CFO's description reflects a finance office that covers its functional responsibilities but is still developing the management infrastructure and professional depth that a district of Somerville's size and complexity requires. This includes recent staff turnover in entry-level roles, an onboarding process that is largely informal and manager-dependent, and recognition that the department has historically lacked evaluative oversight.

At the time of the review, the finance office did not have documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) for most business office functions. District leaders described this as a significant challenge because the office's operations have long depended on institutional knowledge held by individual staff members rather than written guidance. For example, one district leader said that when new staff joined the team, onboarding was largely informal and driven by direct managers, and that without structured protocols it created a sink-or-swim dynamic for the new hire. The CFO indicated that developing SOPs is a priority for the team. The absence of written SOPs for business office operations, including procurement workflows, budget monitoring routines, and staff responsibilities, represents a vulnerability to continuity when staff transitions occur. Developing and documenting SOPs for core finance office functions is an area of growth for the district.

Somerville uses MUNIS as its financial management system, which it operates on the city's platform as consistent with the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System. The CFO described using MUNIS to monitor and control expenditures, produce budget-to-actual reports, and manage payroll and accounts payable. The CFO extracts and analyzes budget data at department and school levels, and then he uses these extracts to build increasingly granular budget monitoring tools, including a multi-tab spreadsheet that tracks historical spending, year-to-date actuals, and school-level non-personnel allocations.

At the time of the review, the district's Year-to-Date Non-Personnel Investment Report covered activity reported through November 2025. AIR's review of this report found that it offers function-level monitoring for more than 30 budget departments and school cost centers; and includes each

department's original budget, monthly remaining balances, percentage invested, and a three-tier status designation (i.e., On Target, Watch, or Over).

Superintendent Carmona referenced the introduction of a spending dashboard this year as a significant change from prior practice, explaining that principals and department heads had historically spent without consistent visibility into their remaining balances, and that the district had experienced overruns as a result. District leaders noted that the current system of periodic reporting to budget holders represents a meaningful improvement in financial monitoring, although the CFO characterized current controls as still being established as routine practice rather than fully institutionalized. There is limited evidence of formal records management practices in the finance office. The CFO described the department as holding substantial but informal institutional knowledge. Beyond compliance-driven recordkeeping, the CFO indicated the district lacks formalized procurement file management routines and tracking procedures for contracts in process. The CFO described working to improve procurement documentation but noted that this work was also still in the early stages. Somerville operates within a city structure in which the municipal government maintains ownership of all school buildings and provides a range of services to the district, including custodial services, facilities maintenance, and capital improvements. As described by a representative in the town government focus group, the Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for building maintenance and custodial services, and major capital repairs such as boiler replacements or roof work are also handled by the city, not the district. An Infrastructure Asset Management (IAM) department within the city evaluates building conditions with architects and engineers and develops cost estimates for capital needs.

A written agreement between the city and the district exists but, as described by the city finance representative, it has not been updated to reflect the current scope of city services provided to schools. The city representative noted that the agreement does not capture all services the city provides to the district, including the health insurance and building maintenance costs that the city absorbs. Both the district and city acknowledged that while informal understandings supplement the written agreement, the latter does not fully define the division of responsibilities. Updating the written agreement between the city and school district detailing the current scope of the city's services provided to schools is an area of growth for the district.

Budgeting and Budget Process

Somerville follows a structured annual budget development process that begins in the fall and concludes with a school committee vote in late May or early June, followed by a vote by city council. For fiscal year 2026, the process began in January 2025 with check-in meetings between the CFO and principals and department heads, during which the CFO distributed budget templates and established expectations for submissions. Schools and departments were given a budget workbook in December 2024 that included their prior-year non-personnel spending history and a preliminary allocation. Those involved with the process were given approximately one month to complete and return the workbook before budget collaborative meetings began in February.

The budget collaboration process, which involved meetings with all 36 budget departments and school principals, replaced what had previously been a two-week round of simultaneous, in-person deliberations that the CFO described as inequitable, not data-driven, and unduly influenced by

proximity and relationships. In the new model, departments presented their requests using a standardized template and submitted personnel requests through a separate form. The CFO compiled all requests, presented the results to the school committee throughout February and March, and then worked with district leaders to determine final allocations.

The fiscal year 2026 budget development process also included an effort to move from approval of a single large personnel lump sum to a more detailed, school-level salary structure. In prior years, the school committee voted on a single aggregate personnel line of approximately \$93.8 million without a breakdown by school or position type. For fiscal year 2026, the district published a detailed salary by cost center report that presented staffing levels by school, the associated per-pupil salary cost, and FTE counts by program area and for the first time published a budget book. The development of a budget book and salary by cost center report, both firsts for the district, represent significant steps toward budget transparency and informed governance, are strengths of the district.

For fiscal year 2026, the CFO developed an equity-driven formula for distributing non-personnel budgets to schools based on demographic criteria for each school. This replaced a prior approach in which historical allocations persisted regardless of school need, resulting in inequitable per-pupil distribution. As the CFO described, the school serving the highest proportion of students from lower-income families had previously received the least funding on a per-pupil basis. However, after applying the new formula, that school's allocation increased substantially, representing a deliberate shift in resourcing toward equity. The district's new equity-driven approach to budget allocation across its schools is a strength.

Still, the CFO acknowledged that personnel costs represent approximately 87 percent of the district's total budget, and that the equity-driven formula has not yet been applied to staffing decisions. He noted that redistributing personnel resources would require data, stakeholder engagement, and careful management to avoid disruption. He described this as a multiyear undertaking that the district intends to work toward future budget cycles.

School committee members noted that while they received personnel lists and broad departmental line items, there was limited specificity in non-personnel budget codes that allowed them to evaluate whether allocations aligned with the district's strategic goals or were producing desired outcomes for students, and some members also indicated that it was difficult to determine whether budget decisions were proactive or reactive.

With respect to grants management, the district employs a part-time grants manager in the finance office. The CFO provides oversight of grants management as part of his broader financial responsibilities. However, the district did not provide documentation of a formal grants management strategy, a districtwide grants portfolio, or a compliance monitoring calendar at the time of this review.

The CFO described supporting school-based bookkeepers and program offices with grants-related financial oversight but pointed out that some bookkeepers did not consistently follow best practices, and that the finance department was working to provide more guidance. The CFO confirmed that, at the time of the review, SOPs did not exist. Developing formal districtwide grant management SOPs

that include grant prioritization, alignment to strategic goals, and systematic compliance monitoring routines is an area of growth for the district.

The district's approach to budget monitoring and spending controls has evolved under the current CFO's leadership. Superintendent Carmona explained that the new budget dashboard, that was not in place prior to the CFO's arrival, gives principals and department heads ongoing visibility into their remaining balances. The CFO described introducing a clear expectation that no account should exceed its appropriated balance and was working to build regular monitoring routines across departments.

District leaders noted that personnel budget management presented the most significant control challenge for fiscal year 2026. As the CFO described, the district agreed to a new collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' association in June 2024, but did not cost out the implications of added parental leave and the district's shift to a weighted caseload model. Additionally, at the time of the review, the district had several expenses that were anticipated to go well over budget, including a substitute teacher line that had been appropriated at \$715,000 but was on track to reach over \$1 million by year-end. This gap indicates a pattern of insufficient precision in prior-year personnel budgeting, which, as noted earlier, included the school committee approving a single aggregate salary line without school-level detail.

In June 2024, when the CFO was approximately six weeks into his role, he created a three-year budget projection for the city using a more granular methodology than the prior practice by applying a flat percentage increase to the prior-year total. He acknowledged that this projection was produced before he had a full understanding of the budget's structural composition, and that the district will need to refine its multiyear planning methodology as budget processes mature. While the district has projections for a level-service budget, they do not have projections for a budget that prioritizes the districts' goals. Therefore, the absence of a formal multiyear financial plan that reflects the district's goals and priorities is an area for growth.

Operations

As described in the preceding section, school buildings in Somerville are owned and maintained by the city, a structural arrangement that shapes how the district manages its day-to-day facilities responsibilities. Custodial services are provided by DPW staff working in school buildings; routine maintenance is handled by DPW; and major capital repairs, including roofs and mechanical systems, are contracted and managed by the city. Within this shared model, the district's director of operations coordinates with the city's DPW on facilities work, transportation logistics, and safety, and serves as the primary district liaison across these operational areas. Because building-related maintenance requests flow through the city rather than through an independent district work order system, the district's operational role is primarily one of coordination and communication rather than of direct management of facilities.

Consistent with the city's broader facilities responsibilities, transportation is also a city function. The city provides student transportation as part of its non-net school spending obligations, and the district tracks district-funded transportation costs as a distinct budget area in its financial monitoring reports.

Although facilities and transportation rely heavily on city infrastructure, the district maintains a more independent operational footprint in technology. As described by the CFO, Somerville's technology department includes dedicated staffing, with positions including a technology director, assistant systems administrator, technology coordinator, technology specialists, and a technology technician. The department also has contracted services for network management, security, and device support. The fiscal year 2026 budget references asset management tools for technology, including platforms for help desk and asset tracking functions, indicating that the district has begun investing in systems to support inventory and technical support at scale.

The district's procurement and contracting function operates at the intersection of internal finance office capacity and coordination with city offices, much like facilities and transportation. The CFO holds primary responsibility for procurement and contracting and is supported by a procurement and contract specialist. As noted by the city's representative in the town government focus group, the city's director of purchasing has participated in coordination meetings with the district's procurement contact to address concerns about contract language and processing delays, indicating that both the district and city are actively working to align their practices.

Despite this coordination, the CFO's description of procurement workflows suggests that processes are managed largely through individual staff knowledge rather than documented written procedures, consistent with the broader challenge of institutionalizing SOPs described in the *Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure* section. The district does not yet have a documented procurement and contracting workflow aligned with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B requirements, supported by written procedures, and accessible to all relevant staff, which is an area for growth.

Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning

Capital asset tracking in Somerville reflects a shared responsibility between the district and the city. Because all school buildings are city-owned, the city's IAM department conducts evaluations of building conditions and develops cost estimates for capital needs. The city's DPW manages the physical maintenance of school buildings and conducts general asset oversight as part of its management of citywide property. District staff confirmed the division of responsibility that the city oversees inventory and major repairs while the district handles day-to-day operational needs.

The district does not have an independent, technology-enabled asset tracking system. The fiscal year 2026 budget references asset management tools for technology, including a platform for help desk and asset tracking, but no respondent or focus group described a comprehensive inventory system that covers assets across departments and buildings. Additionally, there was no documentation of an asset tracking system found at the time of the district review. Developing an internal asset tracking system to complement the city's processes and provide the district with greater independent visibility into its asset inventory is an area of growth for the district.

Capital planning in Somerville is substantially shaped by the city's ownership of school facilities and the city's primacy in capital decision making. The city representative confirmed that major capital investments, including boilers, roofs, and other significant building infrastructure, are the city's responsibility. The IAM department has evaluated school building conditions, and the city developed a capital plan in September 2025 that includes school buildings as a priority. However, the school

committee chair noted that the school committee has requested a formal, long-term school building capital plan from the city for approximately six years, but none have been provided. Collaborating with city leaders to establish and communicate a long-term capital plan for school facilities remains an area for growth.

The most significant near-term capital planning activity is the pending Winter Hill School project, which the school committee chair described as offering the best opportunity in 30 years to anchor a longer-term facilities planning conversation with the city. According to news reports, the Winter Hill School was closed in June 2023 after a piece of concrete fell from the building and the building was deemed unsafe for occupancy. The school committee indicated that this project, which will require city and district coordination over the next several years, creates a structural opening to formalize a capital planning process and define each party's role and timeline for decision making.

The school committee chair noted that, while the district has made progress in recent years in asserting its interests in capital planning conversations, the DPW's building authority has limited the district's independent control over facilities decisions. School committee members indicated that they have repeatedly requested a dedicated DPW staffing arrangement for school buildings and, as noted, a formal school building capital plan for approximately six years.

Recommendations

- *The district should develop and document standard operating procedures for all business office functions.*
- *The district should work with its municipal partners to update the written agreement between the city and school district detailing the current division of services between the two entities.*
- *The district should develop standard operating procedures for grants management and oversight within the business office. Once these procedures are established, the business office and district leaders should work together to develop a comprehensive strategy for applying to and managing grants.*
- *The district should build a multiyear financial plan that projects cost increases over time. To do so, the district may consider adopting budget software that produces a more comprehensive, precise budget. Once this plan has been developed, the business office should begin providing regular updates on progress and adjustments to district leaders and the school committee.*
- *The district should develop and document a procurement and contracting workflow that is aligned with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B requirements, supported by written procedures and accessible to all relevant staff.*
- *The district should develop and implement an efficient and transparent internal asset tracking system.*
- *The district should collaborate with the city to develop a comprehensive, long-term capital plan for the city's schools.*

For related resources, see Appendix C.

Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in Somerville. The team conducted 73 classroom observations during the week of April 6 and held interviews and focus groups between April 6-10. 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
- Somerville's curriculum unit template
- published educational reports on the district by DESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
- district documents such as 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

Somerville Public Schools

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

April 2026



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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.

Six observers visited Somerville Public Schools during the week of April 6, 2026. Observers conducted 73 observations in a sample of classrooms across eleven schools. Observations were conducted in grades PK-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: PK–3, Upper Elementary, and Secondary. The PK–3 tool was used to observe grades PK–3, the Upper Elementary tool was used to observe grades 4–5, and the Secondary tool was used to observe grades 6–12.

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

Table 1. CLASS PK–3 Domains and Dimensions

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

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

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions

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

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 PK–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 (PK-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 PK–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 PK–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*: 5.6

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	1	1	13	9	13	37	5.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	2	4	4	2	12	5.5
Grades 9-12	0	1	0	3	11	8	1	24	5.2
Totals	0	1	1	6	28	21	16	73	5.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 1] + [4 \times 6] + [5 \times 28] + [6 \times 21] + [7 \times 16]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 5.6$

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 PK–12

Teacher Sensitivity encompasses the teachers' 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 PK–3 Manual*, p. 32, *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 27, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 27).

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

Teacher Sensitivity District Average*: 6.0

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	0	0	7	13	17	37	6.3
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	1	4	1	6	12	6.0
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	2	7	12	2	24	5.5
Totals	0	0	1	3	18	26	25	73	6.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 18] + [6 \times 26] + [7 \times 25]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 6.0$

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

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

Ratings in the High Range. The teachers' 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 PK–12

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

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

Regard for Student Perspectives District Average*: 4.2

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	2	6	7	13	9	0	37	4.6
Grades 6-8	0	2	2	3	3	2	0	12	4.1
Grades 9-12	1	6	5	3	8	1	0	24	3.6
Totals	1	10	13	13	24	12	0	73	4.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 10] + [3 \times 13] + [4 \times 13] + [5 \times 24] + [6 \times 12]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 4.2$

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 PK–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 PK–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.⁵

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

Negative Climate District Average*: 6.8

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	0	0	0	2	35	37	6.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	0	1	1	9	12	6.4
Grades 9-12	0	1	0	0	0	1	22	24	6.8
Totals	0	1	1	0	1	4	66	73	6.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 1] + [5 \times 1] + [6 \times 4] + [7 \times 66]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 6.8$

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.

⁵ 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 PK–12

Behavior Management refers to the teachers' ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior (*CLASS PK–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*: 6.2

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	0	2	6	16	13	37	6.1
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	3	1	3	5	12	5.8
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	1	2	3	17	24	6.4
Totals	0	0	1	6	9	22	35	73	6.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 6] + [5 \times 9] + [6 \times 22] + [7 \times 35]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 6.2$

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 teachers' 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 PK–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 PK–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*: 6.4

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	0	0	1	17	19	37	6.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	2	4	6	12	6.3
Grades 9-12	0	0	2	0	2	3	17	24	6.4
Totals	0	0	2	0	5	24	42	73	6.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 2] + [5 \times 5] + [6 \times 24] + [7 \times 42]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 6.4$

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 teachers' 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 PK–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 PK–3 Manual*, p. 57; *CLASS Upper Elementary Manual*, p. 63, *CLASS Secondary Manual*, p. 61).

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

Instructional Learning Formats District Average*: 5.3

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	0	0	1	2	13	18	3	37	5.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	2	1	5	2	2	12	5.1
Grades 9-12	1	0	0	2	15	4	2	24	5.1
Totals	1	0	3	5	33	24	7	73	5.3

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [3 \times 3] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 33] + [6 \times 24] + [7 \times 7]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 5.3$

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 PK–3

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

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

Concept Development District Average*: 3.8

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-3**	1	2	6	7	9	0	0	25	3.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 2] + [3 \times 6] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 9]) \div 25 \text{ observations} = 3.8$

**Concept Development does not appear in the CLASS Upper Elementary Manual, therefore scores for the Elementary School Level represent grades PK-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*: 4.4

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades 4-5**	0	0	1	1	7	2	1	12	5.1
Grades 6-8	0	1	2	2	1	3	3	12	5.0
Grades 9-12	1	4	7	4	6	2	0	24	3.7
Totals	1	5	10	7	14	7	4	48	4.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 5] + [3 \times 10] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 14] + [6 \times 7] + [7 \times 4]) \div 48 \text{ observations} = 4.4$

**Content Understanding does not appear in the CLASS PK-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*: 2.7

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades 4-5**	0	5	4	2	0	1	0	12	3.0
Grades 6-8	2	1	4	3	2	0	0	12	3.2
Grades 9-12	6	8	7	1	2	0	0	24	2.4
Totals	8	14	15	6	4	1	0	48	2.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 8] + [2 \times 14] + [3 \times 15] + [4 \times 6] + [5 \times 4] + [6 \times 1]) \div 48 \text{ observations} = 2.7$

**Analysis and Inquiry does not appear in the CLASS PK-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 PK–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 PK–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*: 3.7

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-5	1	4	9	8	12	1	2	37	4.0
Grades 6-8	0	2	3	2	4	0	1	12	4.0
Grades 9-12	4	5	5	5	3	1	1	24	3.2
Totals	5	11	17	15	19	2	4	73	3.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 5] + [2 \times 11] + [3 \times 17] + [4 \times 15] + [5 \times 19] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 4]) \div 73 \text{ observations} = 3.7$

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 PK–3

Language Modeling refers to the quality and amount of the teachers' use of language stimulation and language facilitation techniques (*CLASS PK–3 Manual*, p. 79).

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

Language Modeling District Average*: 4.4

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades PK-3**	0	2	5	5	7	5	1	25	4.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 2] + [3 \times 5] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 7] + [6 \times 5] + [7 \times 1]) \div 25 \text{ observations} = 4.4$

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

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

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

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

Instructional Dialogue

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12

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

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

Instructional Dialogue District Average*: 3.9

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	4	8	0	0	12	4.7
Grades 6-8	1	0	5	2	1	3	0	12	3.9
Grades 9-12	2	6	5	4	3	3	1	24	3.5
Totals	3	6	10	10	12	6	1	48	3.9

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 3] + [2 \times 6] + [3 \times 10] + [4 \times 10] + [5 \times 12] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 1]) \div 48 \text{ observations} = 3.9$

**Instructional Dialogue does not appear in the CLASS PK-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*: 5.2

Grade Band	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average
Grades 4-5**	0	0	0	0	6	5	1	12	5.6
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	2	6	2	2	12	5.3
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	7	11	6	0	24	5.0
Totals	0	0	0	9	23	13	3	48	5.2

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as: $([4 \times 9] + [5 \times 23] + [6 \times 13] + [7 \times 3]) \div 48 \text{ observations} = 5.2$

**Student Engagement does not appear in the CLASS PK-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 PK–5

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

Domain/Dimension	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average Scores*
Emotional Support Domain	0	2	7	8	33	33	65	148	5.9
Positive Climate	0	0	1	1	13	9	13	37	5.9
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	2	35	37	6.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	0	7	13	17	37	6.3
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	2	6	7	13	9	0	37	4.6
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	1	4	20	51	35	111	6.0
Behavior Management	0	0	0	2	6	16	13	37	6.1
Productivity	0	0	0	0	1	17	19	37	6.5
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	0	1	2	13	18	3	37	5.5
Instructional Support Domain	2	13	25	27	43	9	4	123	4.1
Concept Development (PK-3 only)	1	2	6	7	9	0	0	25	3.8
Content Understanding (UE only)	0	0	1	1	7	2	1	12	5.1
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	0	5	4	2	0	1	0	12	3.0
Quality of Feedback	1	4	9	8	12	1	2	37	4.0
Language Modeling (PK-3 only)	0	2	5	5	7	5	1	25	4.4
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	0	0	0	4	8	0	0	12	4.7
Student Engagement (UE only)	0	0	0	0	6	5	1	12	5.6

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 1] + [5 \times 13] + [6 \times 9] + [7 \times 13]) \div 37 \text{ observations} = 5.9$

**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: $([6 \times 2] + [7 \times 35]) \div 37 \text{ observations} = 6.9$. 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

Domain/Dimension	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average Scores*
Emotional Support Domain	0	2	2	6	11	7	8	36	5.2
Positive Climate	0	0	0	2	4	4	2	12	5.5
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	1	4	1	6	12	6.0
Regard for Student Perspectives	0	2	2	3	3	2	0	12	4.1
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	1	3	4	8	20	36	6.2
Behavior Management	0	0	0	3	1	3	5	12	5.8
Productivity	0	0	0	0	2	4	6	12	6.3
Negative Climate**	0	0	1	0	1	1	9	12	6.4
Instructional Support Domain	3	4	16	10	13	8	6	60	4.2
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	2	1	5	2	2	12	5.1
Content Understanding	0	1	2	2	1	3	3	12	5.0
Analysis and Inquiry	2	1	4	3	2	0	0	12	3.2
Quality of Feedback	0	2	3	2	4	0	1	12	4.0
Instructional Dialogue	1	0	5	2	1	3	0	12	3.9
Student Engagement	0	0	0	2	6	2	2	12	5.3

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([4 \times 2] + [5 \times 4] + [6 \times 4] + [7 \times 2]) \div 12 \text{ observations} = 5.5$

**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: $([3 \times 1] + [5 \times 1] + [6 \times 1] + [7 \times 9]) \div 12 \text{ observations} = 6.4$

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

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

Domain/Dimension	Low Range (1)	Low Range (2)	Middle Range (3)	Middle Range (4)	Middle Range (5)	High Range (6)	High Range (7)	n	Average Scores*
Emotional Support Domain	1	7	6	8	26	21	3	72	4.8
Positive Climate	0	1	0	3	11	8	1	24	5.2
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	1	2	7	12	2	24	5.5
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	6	5	3	8	1	0	24	3.6
Classroom Organization Domain	0	1	3	1	4	7	56	72	6.5
Behavior Management	0	0	1	1	2	3	17	24	6.4
Productivity	0	0	2	0	2	3	17	24	6.4
Negative Climate**	0	1	0	0	0	1	22	24	6.8
Instructional Support Domain	14	23	24	16	29	10	4	120	3.6
Instructional Learning Formats	1	0	0	2	15	4	2	24	5.1
Content Understanding	1	4	7	4	6	2	0	24	3.7
Analysis and Inquiry	6	8	7	1	2	0	0	24	2.4
Quality of Feedback	4	5	5	5	3	1	1	24	3.2
Instructional Dialogue	2	6	5	4	3	3	1	24	3.5
Student Engagement	0	0	0	7	11	6	0	24	5.0

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 11] + [6 \times 8] + [7 \times 1]) \div 24 \text{ observations} = 5.2$

**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: $([2 \times 1] + [6 \times 1] + [7 \times 22]) \div 24 \text{ observations} = 6.8$

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

Table C1. Resources to Support Curriculum and Instruction

Resource	Description
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.
Curriculum Frameworks and Resources ■ Curriculum Matters Webpage ■ Curriculum Frameworks Resources ■ Implement MA ■ CURATE Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices	DESE offers a suite of resources to support the use of high-quality curriculum that is culturally and linguistically sustaining. These resources include the curriculum frameworks and 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. Additionally, CURATE convenes panels of Massachusetts teachers to review and rate curriculum. These ratings are posted publicly to support schools and districts in selected high-quality instructional materials. Finally, the Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices webpage provides DESE's definition of these practices and highlights their importance in our schools and classrooms.
MTSS Resources: * ■ MTSS Blueprint, Self-Assessment, and Resources ■ Massachusetts Tools for Schools	MTSS is a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that every student receives a high-quality educational experience.

*Some resources may be useful across multiple standard areas

Table C2. Resources to Support Human Resources and Professional Development

Resource	Description
Early Literacy Observation Tools	This tool supports the observation and provision of high-quality feedback to teacher candidates on their practice in evidence-based early literacy. Although developed for teacher candidates, this tool can be used by observers in a variety of contexts.
Educator Evaluation Implementation Resources	A suite of resources and practical tools for effective and equitable implementation of educator evaluation, including Focus Indicators, a subset of Indicators from the Classroom Teacher and School Level Administrator Rubrics that represent high-priority practices for the school year.

Resource	Description
MA Guide to Building Supportive Talent Systems for Educators	This guide provides useful information and resources to support districts in developing and sustaining a workforce that is diverse, culturally responsive, well-prepared, and committed to continuous improvement, so that all students have equitable access to effective educators. Resources include guidance around building hiring, assignment, support, and development systems that support equity and high-quality teaching and learning.
Promising Recruitment, Selection and Retention Strategies for a Diverse Massachusetts Teacher Workforce	This guidebook provides a framework to help district and school leaders design and implement a teacher diversification strategy to improve student achievement and create equitable learning experiences.
“What to Look For” Observation Guides	This is a suite of standards-aligned observation tools to help orient observers around what instruction should look like across grade levels and subject areas.

Table C3. Resources to Support Student Support

Resource	Description
Family Engagement Initiatives and Resources	The Family Engagement Program is designed to strengthen partnerships between families, schools, and communities to foster student success. This webpage provides resources, training, and collaborative opportunities that create an inclusive educational environment where every family feels valued and empowered.
Language Access and Interpretation	This webpage links to guidance around schools’ and districts’ responsibility to provide language interpretation for families with limited English proficiency (LEP) and includes training recommendations and a database of trained interpreters in the state.
MTSS Resources: ■ MTSS Blueprint, Self-Assessment, and Resources ■ Massachusetts Tools for Schools	MTSS is a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that every student receives a high-quality educational experience.
Safe and Supportive Schools: ■ Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Reflection Tool ■ Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students ■ Bullying Prevention and Intervention Rethinking Discipline Initiative	These resources can help guide school- and district-based teams to create safer and more supportive school climates and cultures that allow all students to thrive.

Table C4. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management

Resource	Description
General Resources for Federal Grant Programs	General federal grants resources.

Resource	Description
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.

Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table D1. Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2025-2026

Group	District	Percentage of District	State	Percentage of State
All Students	4,876	100.0%	900,490	100.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	0.1%	2,188	0.2%
Asian	293	6.0%	68,002	7.6%
Black or African American	410	8.4%	93,528	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino	1,874	38.4%	235,969	26.2%
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	349	7.2%	42,988	4.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	10	0.2%	754	0.1%
White	1,934	39.7%	457,061	50.8%

Note. As of October 1, 2025.

Table D2. 2025-2026 Student Enrollment by High-Need Populations

Group	N (District)	Percentage of High Needs (District)	Percentage of District	N (State)	Percentage of High Needs (State)	Percentage of State
All Students with High Needs	2,860	100.0%	58.0%	504,445	100.0%	55.4%
English Learners	1,145	40.0%	23.5%	120,784	23.9%	13.4%
Low Income	2,132	74.5%	43.7%	369,909	73.3%	41.1%
Students with Disabilities	971	34.0%	19.7%	192,218	38.1%	21.1%

Note. As of October 1, 2025. 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 4,935; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 910,659.

Table D3. Chronic Absence^a Rates by Student Group, 2023-2025

Group	N (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	5,137	24.8	23.9	19.3	18.8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	16.7	14.3	14.3	27.3
Asian	316	22.4	24.9	17.7	10.9
Black or African American	466	22.0	23.7	18.5	20.7
Hispanic or Latino	2,064	32.5	31.4	26.3	29.5
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	340	18.0	15.3	16.5	19.3
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	10	22.2	22.2	10.0	22.7
White	1,934	18.4	17.1	12.9	13.9
High Needs	3,190	31.2	31.0	26.1	25.9
English Learners	1,306	34.0	35.3	28.3	27.8
Low Income	2,581	32.4	32.2	27.7	28.9
Students with Disabilities	1,071	31.3	31.9	25.9	26.5

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

Table D4. Total Expenditures Fiscal Years, 2022-2024

Expenditures	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
By school committee	\$82,456,266	\$91,731,243	\$97,755,493
By Municipality	\$33,395,855	\$36,339,285	\$38,615,799
Total from local appropriations	\$115,852,121	\$128,070,528	\$136,371,293
From revolving funds and grants	\$14,990,189	\$16,481,769	\$15,762,629
Total expenditures	\$130,842,310	\$144,552,297	\$152,133,922

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

Table D5. Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years, 2022-2024

Chapter 70 aid to education program	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Chapter 70 state aid ^a	\$20,638,388	\$20,939,048	\$21,245,048
Required local contribution	\$62,371,611	\$66,118,248	\$71,896,983
Required net school spending ^b	\$83,009,999	\$87,057,296	\$93,142,031
Actual net school spending	\$111,637,722	\$121,906,801	\$130,458,920
Over/under required (\$)	\$28,627,723	\$34,849,505	\$37,316,889
Over/under required (%)	34.5%	40.0%	40.1%

Note. Chapter 70 aid to education from Chapter 70 District Profiles sourced from [Chapter 70 Program - School Finance](#) last updated April 11, 2025.

^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 D6. Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2022-2024

Expenditure category	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Administration	\$1,011	\$1,057	\$1,126
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$2,049	\$2,265	\$2,294
Teachers	\$8,952	\$9,000	\$9,216
Other teaching services	\$1,577	\$2,253	\$2,476
Professional development	\$483	\$390	\$434
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	\$728	\$594	\$824
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	\$969	\$1,481	\$1,484
Pupil services	\$2,374	\$2,860	\$2,932
Operations and maintenance	\$2,074	\$2,357	\$2,463
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	\$3,741	\$3,939	\$4,160
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$23,958	\$26,197	\$27,410

Note. Any discrepancy between expenditures and total is because of rounding. Data are from the School Finance Dashboard sourced from [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) last updated April 2025.

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⁶ Column labels for Tables E1-E9: M/E=Percent meeting or exceeding expectations, PME=Partially meeting expectations, NM= Not meeting expectations

Table E1. MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	2,070	39	38	39	42	33	32	34	39	29	30	27	20
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	N/A	N/A	N/A	30
Asian	118	57	56	48	64	32	33	38	26	11	11	14	9
Black or African American	172	21	20	19	26	36	36	44	44	42	44	37	30
Hispanic or Latino	803	18	17	16	22	39	35	41	43	44	48	43	34
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	131	60	56	68	49	24	26	20	35	17	18	12	15
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	N/A	N/A	N/A	25
White	835	60	58	61	50	27	28	26	38	13	14	13	13
High Needs	1,301	20	18	18	23	37	37	41	45	42	45	41	32
English Learners	703	11	10	10	19	36	35	39	41	53	55	51	40
Low Income	1,015	19	17	16	23	37	35	41	44	44	48	43	33
Students with Disabilities	471	13	12	12	12	26	26	30	40	61	62	58	48

Table E2. MCAS ELA Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	348	53	53	44	51	27	26	31	35	19	21	25	15
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	N/A	N/A	N/A	21
Asian	17	70	80	71	76	20	15	29	18	10	5	0	5
Black or African American	48	48	26	29	35	27	52	29	42	24	22	42	23
Hispanic or Latino	155	35	38	27	31	39	31	39	41	26	31	34	28
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	18	N/A	71	72	56	N/A	12	17	33	N/A	18	11	11
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	N/A	N/A	N/A	42	N/A	N/A	N/A	15
White	110	76	72	65	59	13	19	24	33	11	9	12	9
High Needs	234	37	34	28	30	34	35	37	44	29	30	35	26
English Learners	81	6	13	10	11	30	19	31	38	64	69	59	50
Low Income	195	38	35	30	31	33	36	35	43	30	29	35	26
Students with Disabilities	87	22	23	13	17	44	48	34	46	35	29	53	38

Table E3. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	2,084	33	32	33	41	37	39	37	40	30	29	30	19
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	N/A	N/A	N/A	45	N/A	N/A	N/A	28
Asian	118	55	51	57	71	37	36	29	22	8	13	14	7
Black or African American	172	16	11	13	22	36	41	47	46	48	48	40	32
Hispanic or Latino	810	13	12	10	20	41	44	42	47	46	44	48	33
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	129	56	54	61	48	31	34	25	36	13	12	14	16
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	N/A	N/A	N/A	23
White	833	53	51	51	49	34	35	34	39	13	14	15	12
High Needs	1,303	15	13	12	23	42	44	42	47	43	43	45	30
English Learners	707	10	9	7	22	37	42	40	44	53	49	53	34
Low Income	1,019	13	11	10	21	41	43	41	47	46	46	49	32
Students with Disabilities	471	9	9	10	13	31	31	30	41	60	60	61	46

Table E4. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	340	37	38	38	45	48	42	36	39	15	21	26	16
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	N/A	N/A	N/A	19
Asian	17	79	60	76	78	16	30	18	18	5	10	6	4
Black or African American	48	24	25	25	26	59	46	33	49	18	29	42	25
Hispanic or Latino	152	19	22	21	23	62	50	45	47	19	28	34	30
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	17	N/A	56	65	47	N/A	38	29	39	N/A	6	6	13
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	48	N/A	N/A	N/A	14
White	106	59	57	58	53	31	31	28	37	10	12	13	10
High Needs	226	20	20	20	24	60	51	45	49	20	29	35	28
English Learners	79	4	4	11	13	56	41	37	43	40	54	52	44
Low Income	189	20	21	23	24	59	49	44	48	20	29	33	28
Students with Disabilities	81	9	9	5	12	62	56	36	46	28	35	59	42

Table E5. MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grades 5 and 8, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	692	36	40	40	42	36	33	33	39	28	27	27	19
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	26	N/A	N/A	N/A	45	N/A	N/A	N/A	30
Asian	39	69	71	36	65	22	26	56	27	9	3	8	8
Black or African American	49	18	15	29	21	42	37	39	46	41	48	33	33
Hispanic or Latino	279	18	18	17	20	42	43	41	45	39	39	42	35
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	39	56	63	72	50	22	17	21	35	22	20	8	15
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	42	N/A	N/A	N/A	39	N/A	N/A	N/A	19
White	281	58	60	62	51	30	27	24	37	12	13	14	12
High Needs	425	20	19	20	23	41	42	40	45	39	39	40	32
English Learners	227	9	9	9	17	42	41	41	43	48	49	50	40
Low Income	344	20	17	17	21	40	41	40	46	40	42	43	33
Students with Disabilities	141	7	15	16	15	35	31	30	39	58	54	54	46

Table E6. MCAS Science Achievement by Student Group, Grade 10, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
All Students	305	41	42	43	46	43	40	38	38	15	18	19	16
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	N/A	N/A	N/A	40	N/A	N/A	N/A	23
Asian	16	89	80	63	74	6	13	31	20	6	7	6	6
Black or African American	35	30	15	29	26	53	70	46	46	17	15	26	27
Hispanic or Latino	135	22	25	24	24	57	49	45	45	21	26	30	31
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	13	N/A	73	69	49	N/A	13	31	38	N/A	13	0	13
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	N/A	N/A	N/A	48	N/A	N/A	N/A	15
White	106	60	63	65	55	32	28	27	36	8	9	8	10
High Needs	193	24	22	23	25	53	51	48	46	22	27	30	29
English Learners	55	6	4	5	11	40	43	38	39	54	54	56	50
Low Income	162	24	23	24	25	54	51	46	46	21	26	30	29
Students with Disabilities	72	10	18	13	15	48	42	42	43	42	39	46	42

Table E7. MCAS ELA Achievement by Grade, 2023-2025

Grade	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
3	368	42	41	40	42	33	30	36	39	25	29	25	19
4	360	35	34	40	40	38	35	31	41	28	31	29	19
5	374	40	40	37	38	30	36	41	47	30	24	22	15
6	343	41	42	41	42	26	24	30	36	34	34	29	22
7	301	39	32	39	42	36	35	30	36	25	33	31	22
8	324	35	40	40	44	33	30	32	34	31	30	28	22
3-8	2,070	39	38	39	42	33	32	34	39	29	30	27	20
10	348	53	53	44	51	27	26	31	35	19	21	25	15

Table E8. MCAS Mathematics Achievement by Grade, 2023-2025

Grade	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
3	370	35	34	32	44	34	31	31	36	31	35	37	21
4	361	32	30	31	43	36	39	38	40	32	32	31	17
5	377	34	31	31	40	42	47	43	43	24	22	27	17
6	347	36	33	34	41	37	42	41	42	27	25	26	17
7	302	34	32	32	39	33	38	38	41	33	30	29	20
8	327	29	34	37	38	42	38	31	41	29	28	32	21
3-8	2,084	33	32	33	41	37	39	37	40	30	29	30	19
10	340	37	38	38	45	48	42	36	39	15	21	26	16

Table E9. MCAS Science Achievement by Grade, 2023-2025

Grade	# Included (2025)	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2025	% M/E 2025 State	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2025	% PME 2025 State	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2025	% NM 2025 State
5	372	36	39	42	46	32	33	32	34	32	28	27	20
8	320	36	41	39	37	39	33	35	44	25	26	27	19
5 and 8	692	36	40	40	42	36	33	33	39	28	27	27	19
10	305	41	42	43	46	43	40	38	38	15	18	19	16

Table E10. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	1,557	48	49	51	50
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	48
Asian	87	52	53	52	57
Black or African American	116	44	46	48	49
Hispanic or Latino	621	45	48	50	49
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	102	45	49	54	51
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	53
White	626	52	50	51	50
High Needs	954	45	46	48	48
English Learners	488	45	49	48	50
Low Income	751	45	46	48	48
Students with Disabilities	339	43	41	44	45

Table E11. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	272	48	54	48	50
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52
Asian	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	57
Black or African American	34	41	N/A	45	49
Hispanic or Latino	122	41	51	45	47
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	50
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50
White	90	58	60	48	50
High Needs	173	42	47	44	47
English Learners	40	27	47	53	51
Low Income	144	43	47	45	47
Students with Disabilities	69	38	45	37	46

Table E12. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grades 3-8, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	1,576	50	49	51	50
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	48
Asian	92	57	53	60	58
Black or African American	116	42	41	49	49
Hispanic or Latino	633	48	48	47	49
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	100	49	51	52	51
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	53
White	630	52	51	53	50
High Needs	971	47	46	47	48
English Learners	507	47	48	48	51
Low Income	765	47	45	47	48
Students with Disabilities	338	43	44	42	46

Table E13. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Student Group, Grade 10, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	265	45	43	49	50
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52
Asian	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	56
Black or African American	35	37	44	47	50
Hispanic or Latino	118	44	41	50	47
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	50
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	46
White	86	49	45	46	50
High Needs	167	43	41	48	48
English Learners	39	44	40	51	49
Low Income	139	43	42	50	47
Students with Disabilities	63	44	39	37	47

Table E14. MCAS ELA Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2023-2025

Grade	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	330	45	46	49	50
5	339	47	54	51	50
6	311	48	53	55	50
7	275	53	46	50	50
8	302	47	46	48	50
3-8	1,557	48	49	51	50
10	272	48	54	48	50

Table E15. MCAS Mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile by Grade, 2023-2025

Grade	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	333	42	40	44	50
5	343	52	55	50	50
6	318	50	56	56	50
7	277	55	50	52	50
8	305	50	45	53	50
3-8	1,576	50	49	51	50
10	265	45	43	49	50

Table E16. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All Students	360	87.7	85.9	83.6	88.4
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	81.6
Asian	20	100.0	87.5	95.0	95.5
Black or African American	42	97.1	85.7	76.2	82.5
Hispanic or Latino	157	82.2	78.6	76.4	78.9
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	10	83.3	N/A	100.0	88.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80.7
White	131	91.3	94.5	91.6	92.6
High Needs	273	84.2	81.8	79.1	82.2
English Learners	66	71.0	60.4	57.6	66.7
Low Income	251	84.5	81.4	78.9	81.6
Students with Disabilities	91	76.4	81.3	73.6	75.4

Table E17. Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Student Group, 2021-2023

Group	# Included (2021)	2021	2022	2023	State (2023)
All Students	311	89.2	90.0	87.1	90.9
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	85.7
Asian	16	93.8	100.0	87.5	96.3
Black or African American	35	77.4	100.0	91.4	88.5
Hispanic or Latino	145	84.3	85.8	80.0	81.7
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	4	N/A	83.3	N/A	91.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	92.8
White	110	97.3	92.2	94.5	94.2
High Needs	242	84.5	87.2	83.5	85.5
English Learners	53	72.7	79.7	62.3	71.5
Low Income	215	83.5	87.6	83.3	84.8
Students with Disabilities	75	76.6	81.9	81.3	80.0

Table E18. Annual Dropout Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All Students	1,426	3.4	2.0	1.5	2.0
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.1
Asian	79	2.6	1.3	0.0	0.5
Black or African American	140	1.3	2.4	0.0	2.5
Hispanic or Latino	670	4.7	3.3	2.5	4.4
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	50	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.9
White	484	2.7	0.4	0.6	1.1
High Needs	926	4.3	2.9	2.3	3.4
English Learners	258	8.6	7.4	5.8	7.7
Low Income	775	4.0	3.0	2.3	3.6
Students with Disabilities	284	3.1	3.4	1.1	2.9

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All Students	5,133	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.4
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.8
Asian	313	1.0	1.0	N/A	0.3
Black or African American	449	2.7	2.0	2.7	2.1
Hispanic or Latino	2,090	1.9	2.1	2.9	1.9
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	311	N/A	0.4	1.3	1.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.9
White	1,954	0.6	1.1	1.0	1.1
High Needs	3,287	1.8	2.1	2.7	1.9
English Learners	1,265	1.2	2.4	2.5	1.4
Low Income	2,710	1.9	2.3	3.0	2.1
Students with Disabilities	1,046	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.4

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All Students	5,133	2.2	2.2	1.5	2.4
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.5
Asian	313	1.4	0.3	N/A	0.6
Black or African American	449	3.4	3.3	2.4	4.6
Hispanic or Latino	2,090	2.9	2.9	2.1	3.8
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	311	N/A	2.2	2.3	2.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.5
White	1,954	1.3	1.4	0.9	1.5
High Needs	3,287	2.9	3.0	2.2	3.6
English Learners	1,265	2.0	1.8	0.9	2.6
Low Income	2,710	3.0	3.4	2.4	4.0
Students with Disabilities	1,046	4.3	5.1	4.1	4.5

Table E21. Advanced Coursework Completion Rates by Student Group, 2023-2025

Group	# Included (2025)	2023	2024	2025	State (2025)
All Students	703	57.5	65.3	63.4	68.8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	55.9
Asian	40	73.5	85.7	92.5	87.2
Black or African American	75	50.0	58.1	58.7	58.9
Hispanic or Latino	324	44.0	54.2	52.5	56.1
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	27	60.0	66.7	70.4	70.3
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	67.6
White	234	72.7	77.2	74.4	74.1
High Needs	451	44.7	51.5	49.7	53.8
English Learners	119	15.2	19.5	18.5	34.9
Low Income	400	44.3	49.4	51.5	54.7
Students with Disabilities	124	33.6	46.6	28.2	41.2

Table E22. Accountability Results, 2025

School	Cumulative Progress Toward Improvement Targets (%)	Percentile	Overall Classification	Reason for Classification
District	47%	N/A	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Moderate progress toward targets
Capuano Early Childhood Center	N/A	N/A	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Albert F. Argenziano School at Lincoln Park	78%	40	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Meeting or exceeding targets
Arthur D. Healey	58%	24	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
Benjamin G. Brown	71%	91	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
E. Somerville Community	54%	22	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
John F. Kennedy	64%	83	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets

School	Cumulative Progress Toward Improvement Targets (%)	Percentile	Overall Classification	Reason for Classification
West Somerville Neighborhood	46%	41	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Low student group performance for Hispanic or Latino students
Winter Hill Community	31%	9	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Among the lowest 10% of schools
Full Circle High School	N/A	N/A	Insufficient data	Insufficient data
Next Wave Junior High	N/A	N/A	Requiring assistance or intervention	In need of focused/targeted support: Low participation rate for High Needs students
Somerville High	22%	31	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Limited or no progress toward targets