

Northbridge Public Schools

Comprehensive District Review Report

December 2024

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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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 Northbridge Public Schools (hereafter, Northbridge) in December 2024. 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.¹ The resulting report provides an in-depth look at district systems, policies, and practices and includes recommendations to promote systemic improvements and advance equitable student outcomes and experiences.

In addition, to collect data on instructional practices, three observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Northbridge during the week of December 9, 2024. The observers conducted 72 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, English language arts (ELA), and mathematics. The Teachstone Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) protocol, developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia,² guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of the CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

Leadership and Governance

The Northbridge School Committee maintains a strong working relationship with the district superintendent and town leadership, enabling effective governance and transparency. The committee, composed of elected members, collaborates closely with the superintendent to oversee budget decisions and support the district's strategic plan (2024-2027). School committee meetings provide a platform for regular updates twice per month, including data-driven reports from the superintendent and presentations from district and school leaders on School Improvement Plans (SIPs). A review of meeting minutes and interviews with stakeholders highlights alignment between the district's strategic plan and individual SIPs, demonstrating a coordinated approach to improvement efforts. In addition, the committee's use of subcommittees focused on financial planning, policy development, and facility improvements further strengthens its oversight. The district's commitment to collaboration is reflected in structured budget discussions and strategic initiatives such as "Voice and Choice" and student surveys, which led to the creation of a woodworking course.

Even with well-established governance structures, key district administrators hold multiple roles, thus increasing their workload. The superintendent and certain other district staff manage numerous responsibilities, and the district still struggles to retain diverse staff and school leaders. In addition, the district has established school councils, including parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) to engage families, but participation varies, and there is still

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

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

room to improve structured communication methods to share progress with the broader community. Some parents described the PTA as a strong, supportive community, whereas others noted challenges, such as meetings scheduled during the school day, which limit accessibility. District staff also reported that SEPAC relies on the same parents to take on leadership roles, with limited new membership. Parent engagement remains an area of mixed experiences, with some families feeling involved and others expressing difficulty accessing opportunities.

Curriculum and Instruction

Northbridge has a clearly defined instructional vision centered on student agency and engagement, as reflected in its Voice and Choice strategic objective and initiative. The district actively promotes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to enhance accessibility and student-centered learning, with implementation monitored through learning walks and common planning time (CPT) meetings. A structured five-year curriculum review process assures the regular evaluation of instructional materials, using resources such as CURATE and EdReports, with final approvals made by the school committee. In addition, educators have autonomy to adapt materials, a process known as “Northbridge-ifying” the curriculum, which staff feel allows for greater responsiveness to student needs. District and school improvement plans also focus on empowering students and increasing student voice and choice. The district also prioritizes multitiered systems of support (MTSS), with targeted intervention during the “What I Need” (WIN) block at the elementary level and the RAMS block at the middle and high school levels. Northbridge also offers a variety of academic and extracurricular opportunities, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, career and technical education (CTE) pathways, and elective programs that align with student interests.

Northbridge has a strong foundation for student-centered learning; however, key areas for growth still remain. Instructional plans do not fully embed the integration of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, and district leaders acknowledge the need for ongoing professional learning in this area. Access to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) is inconsistent, particularly at the high school level, where curriculum documentation is less systematically maintained. In addition, Students with Disabilities and English Learners (ELs) receive targeted services, but the district lacks a clear system for evaluating the effectiveness of these programs, contributing to concerns among parents and staff. Finally, instructional observations and student feedback suggest that although Voice and Choice is a district priority, opportunities for higher-order thinking and extended academic dialogue are not consistently embedded across classrooms, particularly at the secondary level.

Assessment

Northbridge collects and uses academic and nonacademic data to gain a comprehensive understanding of student performance and has a process for reviewing its assessment tools for bias, which are strengths of the district. The district gathers a range of student data, including assessments such as DIBELS (Dynamic indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Wonders (screening and benchmark), and Galileo (district created benchmark assessments), as well as nonacademic indicators such as attendance and behavior referrals. These data points are accessible through a Looker Studio data dashboard, allowing teachers, school leaders, and district staff to track student progress and identify support

needs. Educators report receiving support in using data through district-created protocols, CPT, and professional learning community (PLC) meetings; these resources support a shared vision for data use across schools and teachers, which is a strength of the district. In addition, the district incorporates feedback into its assessment strategy so that assessments remain accessible and informative. The district also disaggregates student data to inform strategic planning, including attendance trends, discipline rates, and graduation outcomes.

Although the district has well-established data collection and reporting systems, variability exists in the application of student goal-setting and data-sharing practices across grade levels. At the elementary level, students engage in DIBELS-based goal setting and track their progress, whereas middle school students participate in MCAS data reviews and reflection activities. At the high school level, goal setting occurs primarily during advisory periods, but implementation is inconsistent. In addition, teachers and families receive regular updates through easily-accessible platforms such as Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, and ClassDojo, but high school grading policies are not publicly available. Educators also noted that teachers have access to classroom and benchmark assessment data, but a need exists for greater consistency in how students engage with their own performance data.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Northbridge has a collaborative approach to addressing staff concerns and a strong district culture, which are both strengths of the district. The district tracks staffing through Infinite Campus, hiring through SchoolSpring, and staff attendance through Frontline, providing data to inform staffing decisions and budget planning. Although the district lacks a dedicated human resources director, the supervisor of administrative services and the superintendent oversee human resources functions, including licensure verification, staff evaluations, and disciplinary procedures. The district has a structured grievance process, with staff reporting that school leaders and union representatives work collaboratively to address concerns before formal disciplinary actions become necessary. Northbridge also fosters a positive staff culture through regular appreciation initiatives, such as the Unsung Hero award, staff wellness events, and school-based Culture Crews. The district's mentoring program, which pairs new teachers with experienced mentors for structured support, and onboarding processes are also strengths, providing smooth integration for new hires.

Despite these strengths, significant staffing challenges persist, particularly in retention and recruitment. Northbridge struggles to attract and retain educators, with salary competitiveness being a primary concern among staff. Although the district has attempted recruitment strategies such as job fairs and outreach to colleges, vacancies remain difficult to fill, particularly in specialized areas. In addition, staffing shortages at the elementary level have resulted in inconsistent staff coverage across the building. The lack of a formal teacher recruitment and retention plan, as well as an unused employee reference guide, further exacerbates these issues. Teacher evaluations are thoroughly documented, which is a strength of the district, but administrator evaluations show inconsistent completion rates and limited feedback on areas for improvement. Professional learning is also available, but teachers express frustration with the relevance of those opportunities, citing a lack of alignment with their immediate classroom needs. Providing consistent opportunities for teachers to collaborate across different subject areas and grade levels is also an area of growth for the district.

Student Support

Northbridge has established a foundation for a safe and supportive learning environment through clear policies, student leadership opportunities, and a structured MTSS framework that incorporates multiple tiered mental and behavioral health services. The district regularly collects and analyzes student, staff, and school climate data to monitor culture and engagement. Safety measures, such as emergency response and bullying prevention plans, are widely communicated to students and families, whereas initiatives such as “Belonging and Connections” aim to make certain that every student has a trusted adult at school. Another strength is the district’s commitment to wraparound services, with family liaisons, school-based food pantries, and partnerships with local organizations providing essential resources. In addition, Northbridge developed a Student Support Team [SST] Best Practices Manual to guide intervention planning and monitoring across all school levels.

Although Northbridge has established policies and implemented many student supports, inconsistencies in behavioral expectations and discipline enforcement persist, with students and staff reporting a lack of clarity when applying consequences. Chronic absenteeism remains a challenge, particularly for Low Income students and English Learners. Although the district tracks attendance data, multilingual and culturally responsive supports are necessary to engage families more effectively. Northbridge offers MTSS supports, but fidelity in implementation remains an area for growth, and staff turnover and inconsistent professional development have led to gaps in execution.

Financial and Asset Management

Northbridge’s Business and Finance Office has experienced leadership and provides strong financial oversight and stable district operations. The director of business and finance, along with key staff members, manages payroll, purchasing, budgeting, and compliance with state and federal regulations. The district uses the MUNIS system for financial management and maintains a structured system for tracking, categorizing, and destroying financial documents. Northbridge follows a well-documented budget process, with budget presentations, schedules, and financial policies publicly available on the district website. The district provides regular financial updates to the school committee, indicating transparency in decision-making. In addition, Northbridge has a clearly defined partnership and collaborates effectively with the town, working closely on payroll, purchasing, and capital planning. Northbridge meets net school spending requirements and uses a mix of state, local, and grant funds to cover expenses such as special education placements and transportation.

Despite these strengths, financial constraints present challenges, particularly for staff salaries, retention, and the long-term sustainability of grant-funded initiatives. Northbridge’s per-pupil spending remains significantly below the state average, and teacher salaries are lower than those in neighboring districts, making it difficult to attract and retain staff. The teachers’ contract is up for renewal in 2025, adding urgency to this issue. Although the district has a structured budget process, teachers and families feel that their input is not fully incorporated, and parents reported feeling unwelcome when asking questions at budget meetings. In addition, although the district applies for grant funding and has systems in place to comply with grant terms, maintaining key programs beyond short-term grant cycles is a challenge. In operations and facilities, custodial staff shortages

impact classroom cleanliness, and technology maintenance has been inconsistent at times, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. Although the district integrates capital planning with the town's long-term financial strategy.

Northbridge Public Schools: District Review Overview

Purpose

Conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws, comprehensive district reviews support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews carefully consider the effectiveness of systemwide functions, referring to the six district standards used by DESE: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. Reviews 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 advance equitable student outcomes and experiences.

Methodology

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

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

Site Visit

The site visit to Northbridge occurred during the week of December 9, 2024. The site visit included 22 hours of interviews and focus groups with approximately 71 stakeholders, including school committee members, district administrators, school staff, students, students' families, and teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted three teacher focus groups with six elementary school teachers, six middle school teachers, and six high school teachers; two student focus groups with eight middle school and eight high school students; and two family focus groups with 11 parents. Data collection also included distributing a questionnaire to district leaders, as well as to each principal, to gather information about district and school processes and

operations; respondents in Northbridge completed the district questionnaire and all three principal questionnaires.

The site team also conducted 72 observations of classroom instruction in three schools. Certified team members conducted instructional observations using the Teachstone CLASS protocol.

District Profile

The Town of Northbridge is southwest of Boston and comprises several villages, including Whitinsville, Linwood, Rockdale, Riverdale, and Northbridge Center. According to [census data](#), Northbridge's median income from 2019-2023 was \$103,355, which is just above the state median income of \$101,341. In 2023, Northbridge had an estimated 16,455 residents.

The superintendent of Northbridge is Amy McKinstry, who was appointed in 2019. Governance of the district is through a school committee composed of five members who are elected for three-year terms.

In the 2024-2025 school year, the district served 1,838 students across its three schools. Since the 2020-21 school year, total enrollment has decreased by 86 students. Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment by school for the 2024-2025 school year.

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

School	Type	Grades served	Enrollment
Northbridge Elementary School	Elementary	PK-5	973
Northbridge Middle School	Middle	6-8	394
Northbridge High School	High	9-12	471
		Total	1,838

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

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

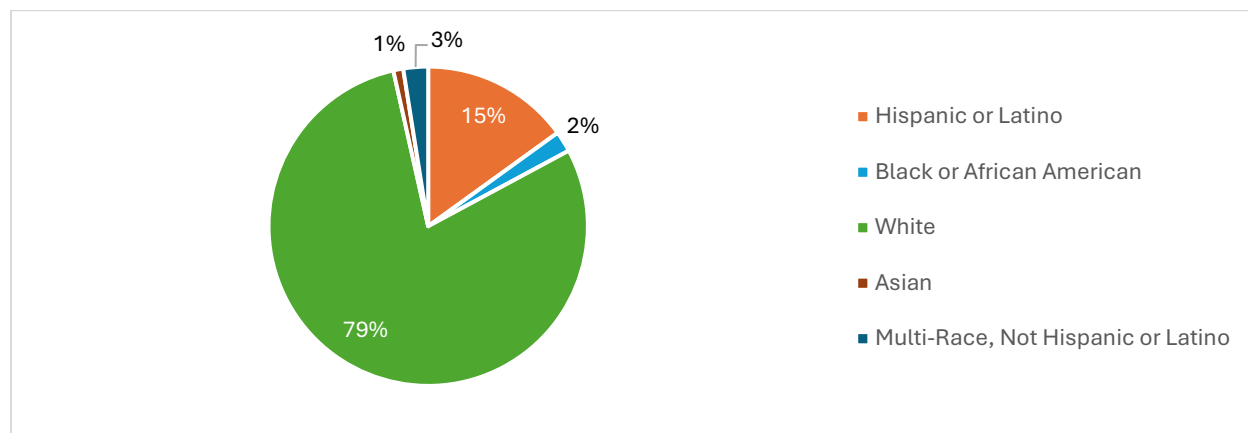


Figure 2. Distribution of Students by Selected Populations, 2024-2025

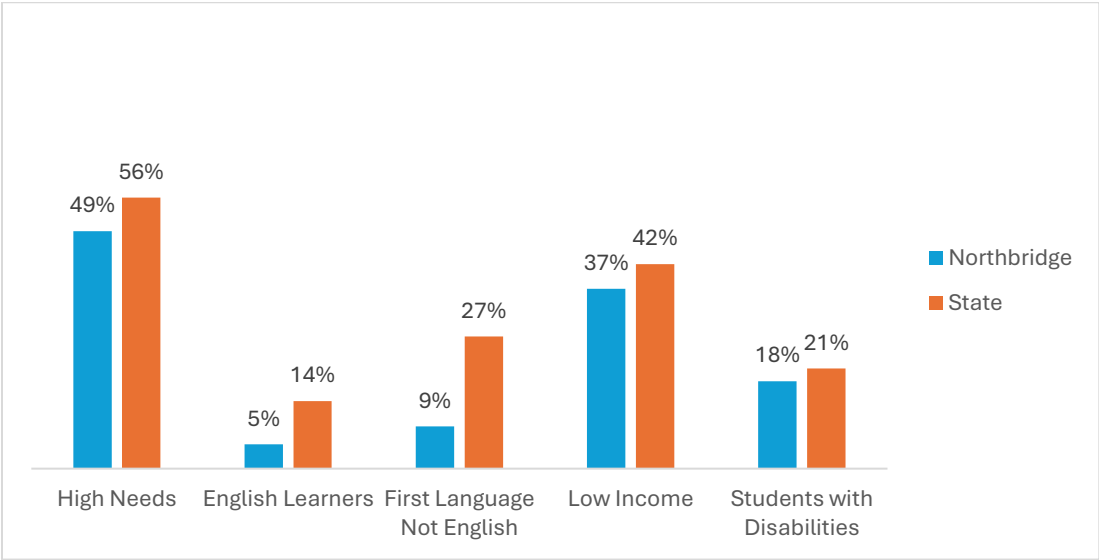
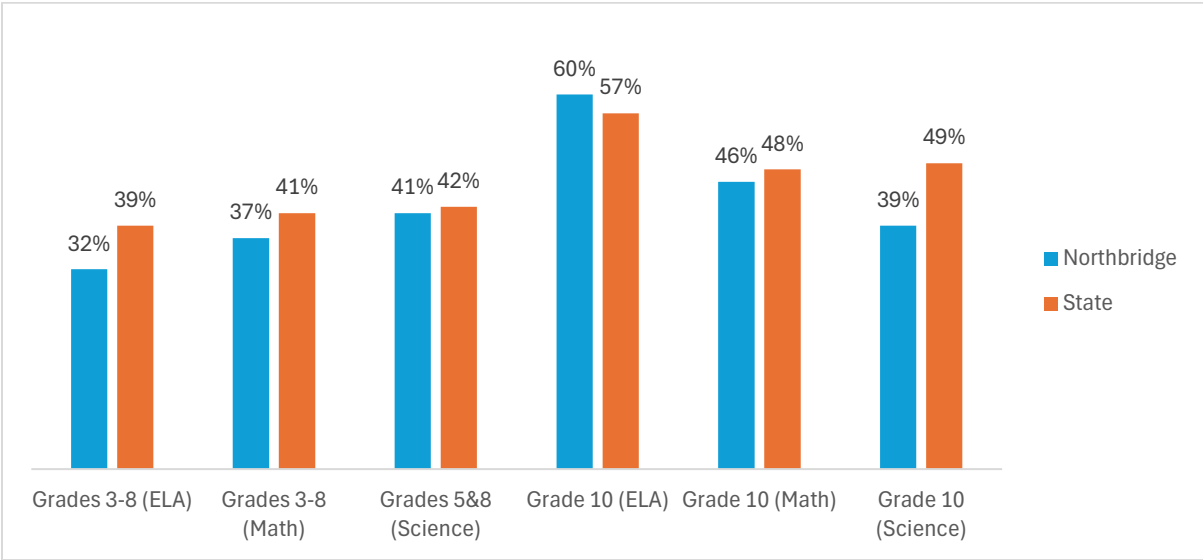


Figure 3 shows the percentage of Northbridge’s All Students group meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS compared with the statewide percentage of All Students meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS. In 2024, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations was lower for Northbridge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

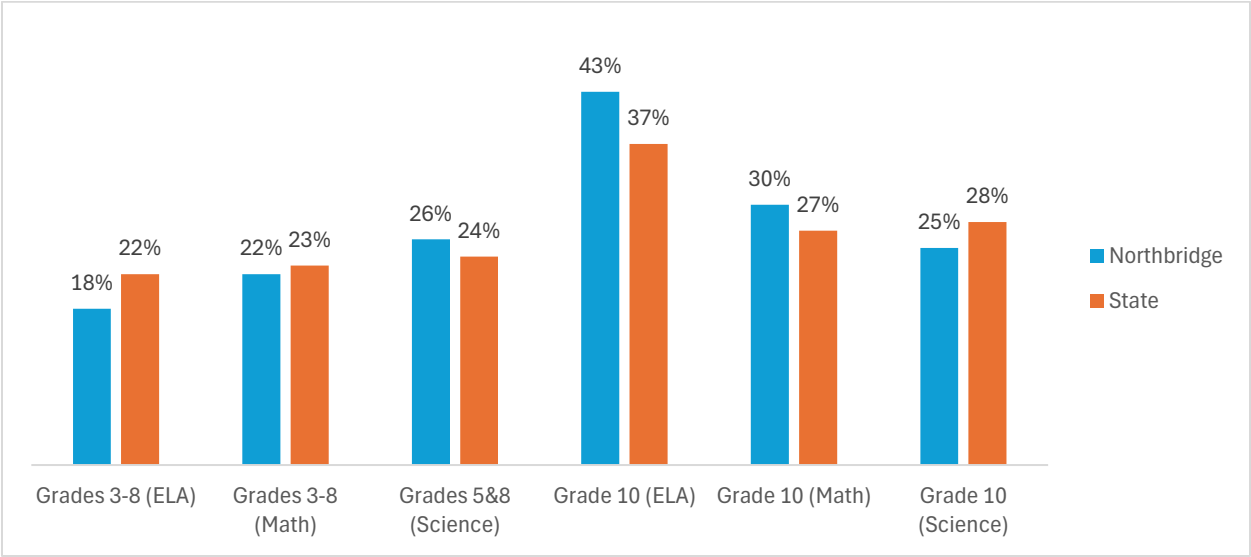
Figure 3. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, MCAS, 2024



Northbridge’s High Needs student group, which comprises 49 percent of the district, met or exceeded expectations on the 2024 ELA grades 3-8, mathematics grades 3-8, and science grade 10 MCAS assessments at rates 1 percentage point to 4 percentage points below the High Needs student group across the state (see Figure 4). However, Northbridge’s High Needs student group met or exceeded expectations on the 2024 MCAS 2 percentage points to 6 percentage points higher

than the High Needs student group across the state in Grades 5 and 8 science, Grade 10 ELA, and Grade 10 mathematics.

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



In 2023, Northbridge’s four-year cohort graduation rate increased by 4 percentage points, from 84.6 percent in 2021 to 88.6 percent in 2023, with gains of 5.9 percent to 17.2 percent across most groups with reportable data, except for Hispanic or Latino students. The district’s graduation rate in 2023 was 0.6 percentage points lower than the state rate of 89.2 percent. In contrast, the district’s dropout rate was slightly above the state rate for the All Students group and 2.8 percentage points higher than the state rate for the Low Income student group.

Of students who graduated from the district in 2022-2023, 54.8 percent went on to attend a college or university by March 2024, which is lower than the state rate of 63.2 percent. For the High Needs student group that graduated in 2022-2023, 34 percent went on to attend a college or university, which is below the state rate of 48.4 percent. Furthermore, 20.6 percent of 2022-2023 graduates planned to enter the workforce, compared with 13.8 percent of students across the state.

In 2024 statewide accountability results, Northbridge Elementary School was in the 48th percentile and Northbridge Middle was in the 23rd percentile of non-high schools, and Northbridge High School was in the 29th percentile of high schools statewide. Additionally, Northbridge Public Schools has made moderate progress toward achieving its accountability targets, as set by DESE.

In fiscal year 2023, the total in-district per-pupil expenditure for Northbridge was \$16,723, which is \$2,917 less than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts with similar demographics (\$19,640), and \$1,017 less than the average in-district per-pupil expenditure in districts of similar wealth (\$17,740).³ In-district per-pupil expenditures for Northbridge were \$4,533 less than the

³ Districts with similar demographics and similar wealth are based on [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) (retrieved February 2024).

average state spending per pupil (\$21,256). Actual net school spending was slightly greater than the requirements in the Chapter 70 state education aid program, as shown in Table D5 in Appendix D.

Classroom Observations

Three observers, who focused primarily on instruction in the classroom, visited Northbridge during the week of December 9, 2024. The observers conducted 72 observations in a sample of classrooms across grade levels, focused on literacy, ELA, and mathematics. The CLASS protocol guided all classroom observations in the district. These observations used the three grade-band levels of CLASS protocols: K-3, Upper Elementary (4-5), and Secondary (6-12).

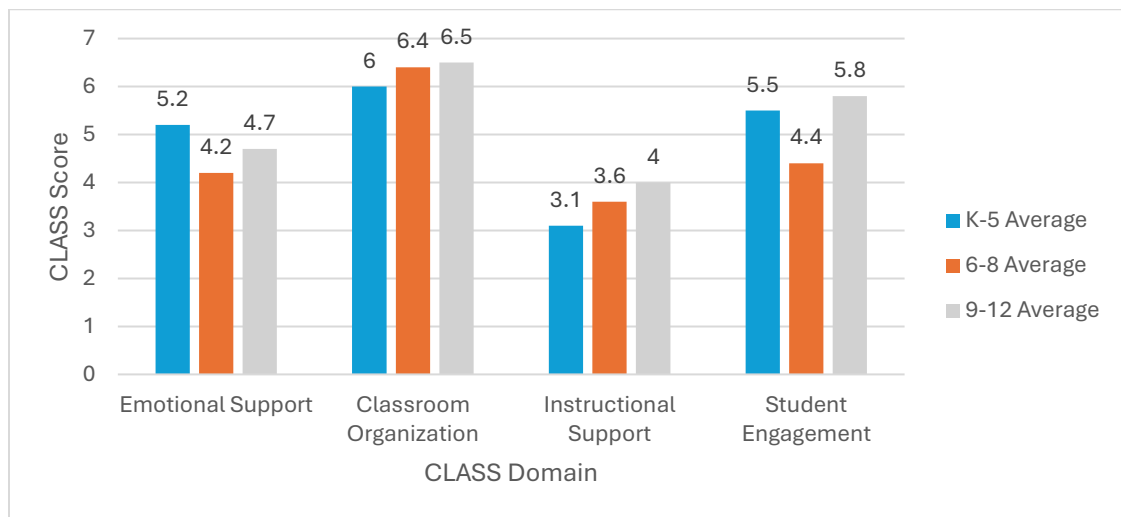
The K-3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The Upper Elementary and Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional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

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

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

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

Figure 5. Northbridge CLASS Domain Averages by Grade Band



Overall, across all grade bands, instructional observations suggest high classroom organization, and mixed evidence of emotional support, student engagement (upper grades only), and consistently 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 antiracist, inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural; values and affirms each student and their families; and creates equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved. It also focuses on the extent to which districts establish, implement, and evaluate policies, plans, procedures, systems, and budgets, with a primary focus on achieving districtwide strategic objectives, in part through equitable and effective use of resources, that 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 Northbridge.

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

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Leadership and Governing Structures	■ The school committee effectively communicates with the superintendent regarding district objectives and priorities. ■ School committee members have designated roles and responsibilities and collaborate on multiple subcommittees. ■ There are strong working relationships between the school committee, the district, and the town manager.	■ Expanding opportunities for all parents to actively engage in the district
Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring	■ Northbridge has a commitment to inclusive and data-driven strategic planning by incorporating stakeholder feedback in shaping its vision, Portrait of a Graduate, and three-year district strategic plan. ■ All school leaders have developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that aligns with the district strategic plan.	■ Developing structured communication methods to share progress on improvement and action plans with the broader community
District Culture	■ The school committee and district administrators foster collaboration and shared decision making to carry out district operations.	■ Recruiting and retaining diverse staff and school leaders ■ Improving communication and transparency across stakeholders, including underrepresented groups

Leadership and Governing Structures

Based on multiple interviews, the Northbridge school committee effectively communicates with the superintendent regarding district objectives and priorities, which is a strength of the district. The current committee has been in place for the last two years, but recent meeting minutes (from June 11, 2024) indicate members have been newly appointed to the positions of chairperson, vice-chair,

and secretary. This stable committee membership contributes to effective communication, as noted by members of the school committee, the town manager, and the superintendent. In addition, the school committee and the superintendent maintain a close working relationship, collaborating on budget decisions and supporting the district's strategic plan. The superintendent also delivers “thorough” and “data-driven” briefs at every school committee meeting, providing transparent updates on the schools, according to school committee members. A review of the district’s website, school committee minutes, and interviews with school committee members reveals that the committee has a functioning governance structure in place and implements policies aimed at providing equitable opportunities for students to excel.

In addition to its strong communication with the superintendent, the school committee maintains strong working relationships with the superintendent and the town manager, which is a strength of the district. The superintendent described this relationship as favorable, noting that past evaluations and feedback were generally positive, and she maintains an “open and honest relationship” with the school committee. Furthermore, a review of school committee meeting minutes indicates a focus on transparency. For example, the minutes from all school committee meetings are publicly available and easily located. The specific minutes from a recent meeting show that the superintendent shared her proposed goals and received input from school committee members. In a subsequent meeting, the superintendent’s summative evaluation and ratings for each category were discussed and approved by the school committee. Furthermore, one school committee member remarked on the strong collaboration, stating, “There’s a pretty collaborative effort between the finance committee, town manager, superintendent, and director of business and finance.”

Effective communication and collaboration also support strong working relationships. The town manager emphasized that the school committee, superintendent, and town manager regularly collaborate to discuss the district’s budget, with each office and their staff offering mutual support. Both the superintendent and school committee members confirmed in interviews and focus groups that clear communication structures are in place. One school committee member noted, “Whenever I have gone to our chairperson with a concern, he funnels it through, and it’s always addressed appropriately.” This open line of communication confirms that concerns are addressed promptly and that this fosters a collaborative environment.

The district’s five school committee members have designated roles and responsibilities and collaborate on multiple subcommittees, which is a strength of Northbridge. These subcommittees focus on key areas such as financial planning, policy development, and facility improvements, thus allowing the committee to manage related district operations. Committee members highlighted their primary responsibilities, which include setting the district budget, establishing and reviewing policies, overseeing the superintendent, and serving as a conduit between the district and the community. One of the committee’s primary duties is collaborating with the district and town to approve the annual budget. To help inform decision-making, the director of business and finance provides updates to committee members at school committee meetings twice per month.

Committee members explained that decisions to reallocate funds occur through a collaborative process. An example of this occurred when the district, as part of its Voice and Choice initiative, surveyed high school students about desired courses. Based on the results, the superintendent and the school committee reallocated funds to add a woodworking course and hire the necessary staff.

This initiative demonstrates the district's commitment to listening to students, valuing their input, and fostering a culture of respect for student perspectives.

The structure of school committee meetings provides various stakeholders with opportunities to share updates with the district community. For example, each meeting includes a "Student Representative Report," in which the nonvoting student member shares information about important events, as well as staff and student sentiments. In addition, the superintendent noted a regular rotation of school and district leaders who provide updates on their areas of responsibility. This includes progress reports from elementary, middle, and high school leaders on their school improvement plan (SIP), followed by an update from the director of pupil personnel services. The superintendent provides progress reports on district goals at the middle and end of the year; the superintendent's report also shares relevant updates at each school committee meeting.

Building on the collaborative structure of school committee meetings, the district leadership team holds meetings twice per month to align district priorities and strategic planning. This team consists of 10 staff members, including the superintendent; school principals; and directors in business and finance, curriculum and instruction, pupil personnel services, facilities and operations, and educational technology. Although tasked with overseeing program implementation and staffing, some members of the team must be flexible and play many different roles, which can create significant demands on their time and energy. The team's ability to manage multiple responsibilities demonstrates flexibility, but it also indicates a need to distribute leadership duties more broadly across the district.

Discussions with staff and school leaders reveal how the district actively supports school leadership teams in implementing school improvement initiatives. District leaders provide professional development, collaboration resources, and dedicated time for school leaders to meet and discuss SIPs. Staff shared that department chairs serve as a bridge between teachers and administrators, relaying information and offering support on curriculum matters. At the elementary level, team leaders and curriculum champions lead curriculum implementation. School leaders also highlighted various active teams and committees within schools, including instructional leadership teams, data teams, student support teams (SSTs), grade-level and subject area teams, student advisory councils, and school council meetings. These teams typically meet weekly to monthly, with district staff participating in school-level instructional leadership activities monthly, focusing on aligning SIPs with the district strategic plan, teacher effectiveness, professional development, and budget decisions.

District leaders, school staff, and parents reported that Northbridge has school councils for each building, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and a district special education parent advisory council (SEPAC). These councils align with district initiatives and comply with state statutes and regulations, providing structured opportunities for parents and families to engage with the district. A review of the Northbridge Middle School's school council meeting minutes indicates that these teams assist the principal in setting educational goals, identifying students' needs, reviewing the annual school budget, and formulating the SIP.

However, parent feedback suggests that some families may face barriers to participation. For those able to participate, the PTA has been a positive experience, with a teacher association member describing the Northbridge Elementary School PTA as a supportive and "tight knit" community.

Similarly, a former school council member highlighted the value of the school council, noting that the district engaged them in discussions about cultural diversity and the perception of positive praise, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into the district's system for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). However, the timing of school council meetings can pose challenges for working parents, as reported by a focus group participant. Similarly, district staff said that the SEPAC has not been as actively engaged as desired, with the same parents repeatedly taking on leadership roles and few new members joining. The superintendent acknowledged the challenges to engaging the broader school community, sharing that although the district shares updates through the "RAMS report," newsletters, and virtual streaming of school committee meetings, parent engagement remains difficult. Expanding opportunities for all parents to actively engage in the district is an area for growth.

Strategic Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

A strength of Northbridge is its commitment to inclusive, data-driven strategic planning, as demonstrated by the active incorporation of stakeholder feedback in shaping the district's vision, Portrait of a Graduate, and three-year district strategic plan. According to the district's website, Northbridge's mission and vision guide the district's educational philosophy. The district's vision states that Northbridge aims to create "confident, empathetic, and responsible individuals [who], inspired by their passions and prepared by their education, [will] achieve personal success, and make positive contributions to society and their community in a positive way."

This vision is part of the district's Portrait of a Graduate, which articulates the key attributes and skills that students should embody to fulfill this vision. Both the vision and the Portrait of a Graduate emphasize developing students holistically so that they are both academically prepared and equipped with social-emotional skills. The Portrait of a Graduate outlines the importance of qualities such as being a strong communicator, a good human, flexible and adaptable, and personally responsible, which align with the district's vision:

The Northbridge Public Schools is a proud community focused on the education and well-being of ALL students. We recognize each student as an individual, and we provide creative and innovative learning opportunities that encourage them to use their unique voices and personal strengths to achieve success both academically and personally.

To support alignment with the district's mission, various stakeholders shaped Northbridge's vision, Portrait of a Graduate, and three-year district strategic plan. According to school committee minutes, Parent and Student Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) Survey responses, and the superintendent interview highlight the collaborative approach used to develop the Portrait of a Graduate, which aligns with the district's mission and vision. The development process involved multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, school leaders, and staff, reflecting the varied perspectives of the community. Through the Parent PoG Survey, parents shared their thoughts on student success, the challenges their children face, and what they expect from the educational experience. Most students participated through surveys, focus groups, and a public service announcement video, and the Superintendent conducted interviews with an additional 50 high school students as part of the process. The student feedback emphasized key areas such as social-emotional learning, academic success, and the development of life skills to help them achieve their future aspirations. In the creation of the district strategic plan, the superintendent also reported gathering student feedback

and receiving more than 700 responses from middle and high school students during the plan's development. The plan then went through multiple rounds of refinement and feedback with a large planning group that included parents, students, and staff. After a round of feedback from the school committee and consideration of staff and student attendance and discipline data, the district leadership team finalized the plan during the summer. According to district leaders and documents, the main priorities that resulted from this process are the following three strategic objectives: intentional leadership, Voice and Choice, and belonging and connections. The district also created a Student Opportunity Act Plan focused on Low Income students and Students with Disabilities at the elementary level.

Each school has developed a SIP that aligns with the district strategic plan, indicating an area of strength. The schools' plans include instructional priorities and strategies aimed at reducing disparities in student opportunities and outcomes. For example, the elementary school established a literacy leadership team to review literacy data and identify areas for staff professional development "to provide consistent instruction to improve student literacy outcomes at all grade levels." In focus group discussions, school leaders explained that SIPs intentionally align with broader district goals. As one school leader explained, the process began with school and district leaders collaboratively finalizing the district's strategic plan during the summer leadership academy. From there, school leaders developed their improvement plans and received input from the school council and department chairs to refine and finalize the plans. In focus groups, teachers reported having the opportunity to provide input through meetings and surveys as the SIPs were being created. Teachers recalled having meetings at the beginning of the school year when department chairs clearly outlined plans to implement their SIP. Other teachers noted that their professional development has supported them in encouraging student voice and implementing instructional materials that are aligned with their schools' improvement efforts.

Discussions with school and district leaders revealed that processes such as walkthroughs, feedback, and regular meetings are in place to monitor improvement plans, but sharing progress with the broader community remains a challenge. School and district leaders engage in both formal learning walks and informal walkthroughs to assess alignment with district priorities, but responses from family focus groups suggest parents are unaware of these efforts. One parent, despite having previously served on the school council, was unaware of the district's current strategic plan, whereas others expressed concerns that the plan often reflects the priorities of the superintendent or professional development initiatives, rather than addressing the needs of families. Several parents noted that communication about the plan could be framed in a way that is more impactful and relevant to families, focusing on elements that resonate with them. This feedback highlights the need for more structured and consistent methods to communicate progress toward improvement plans to the broader community. This feedback highlights an area for growth for the district: developing structured and regular methods of communication to effectively share progress on improvement and action plans with the broader community.

District Culture

The school committee and district administrators foster collaboration and shared decision-making to carry out district operations, which is a strength of the district. The district, school committee, and town collaborate effectively to meet district needs and achieve key goals. Teachers' association representatives described their relationship with the superintendent as "open and honest," noting her understanding and respectful approach. Although the school committee has a negotiations subcommittee, the superintendent handles most staff negotiations and reports back on progress. This strong working relationship has led to successful agreements for custodial, secretarial, cafeteria, and paraprofessional contracts without needing further intervention from the school committee. The town manager plays an advisory role in negotiations between the teachers' association representatives and the Superintendent, explaining the town's financial position and its impact on the district's ability to meet financial demands. Similarly, collaboration was key in the construction of the newly built elementary school, which merged two campuses into one. In accordance with Massachusetts School Building Authority requirements, the town formed a building committee that included representatives from the town's finance committee, the school committee, school administrators, parents, and town board members. This collaborative effort helped secure strong support from voters. Meeting minutes from the town meeting on October 23, 2018 show that 583 voters approved appropriating more than 100 million dollars for building a new school, while only 53 voted against it.

The town and school committee maintain a positive working relationship to support the district. For instance, the town manager explained, "There is a law that says if a school committee member resigns during their term, the committee must meet to appoint a temporary replacement until the next election." He added, "If there are major budget issues, we get involved." In addition, the town's advisory committee meets annually to review the superintendent's proposed budget. Although their role is advisory, committee members ask questions to better understand the impact on services and class offerings. They want to understand impacts so that they can address resident questions, but there has never been opposition to the budget.

Finally, the town and district have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, with the school system managed by the school committee and superintendent, and the town overseen by a board of selectmen and the town manager. The town manager is responsible for town operations, whereas the superintendent handles the district's operations, including finances, facilities, special education, and programming. Although these roles are generally distinct, there are occasional instances of overlap, particularly at the staff level, such as with shared personnel (e.g., the school resource officer). An example of town and district collaboration is the recent creation of a private network system, funded by a town grant, which upgraded the town's communication infrastructure to include the school district's systems.

District staff outlined Northbridge's strategies for recruiting leaders to support stability and sustain initiatives during leadership turnover. However, these strategies do not fully guarantee continuity because the district continues to face significant challenges in both recruiting and retaining staff. State retention data shows that Northbridge had a 50 percent principal retention rate in 2022, 2023, and 2024. The teacher retention rate in 2024 was 77.3 percent, which is lower than the state average of 85.8. Northbridge has a relatively new team of school administrators, with most principals

serving in their current positions for less than two years. According to district staff, noncompetitive salaries compared with neighboring districts are a key barrier to recruitment. The superintendent explained that Northbridge actively seeks to recruit leaders from diverse backgrounds—across different states and even countries—but salary limitations have hindered the district’s ability to attract and retain diverse staff. The superintendent further explained that since the district has struggled with recruiting and retaining staff overall, they have not been able to explicitly focus on hiring diverse leaders or staff.

DESE data shows that the district’s retention rates were below the state average. Teacher retention in Northbridge was 77.3 percent in 2024, falling short of the state rate of 85.8 percent. To address staffing challenges, Northbridge is strengthening its recruitment and leadership development through a district leadership program. A “Leadership Academy” is built into district leadership meetings in order to offer coaching and support to current administrators, many of whom are new in their administrative roles. The academy will also train Northbridge teachers to become future administrators and prepare students for teaching roles. These efforts aim to build internal capacity, creating a pipeline of qualified leaders and educators to support students and sustain district initiatives. The district strategic plan, particularly Strategic Initiative 3, outlines goals for developing leadership programs at all levels—administrators in Year 1, teachers in Year 2, and students in Year 3. These initiatives were not yet in place at the time of the district review but reflect a proactive approach to improving teacher retention. Still, district leaders acknowledged that recruiting and retaining diverse staff and school leaders is an area for growth.

Although Northbridge has made efforts to partner with key stakeholders and engage the community, the district does not intentionally seek input from underrepresented groups in decision making. The district currently engages the community through events, regular newsletters, SEPAC meetings, and open forums about the district’s strategic plan and new initiatives. In developing the district strategic plan, the superintendent convened a planning committee that included parents, teachers, and students, but there was no mention of targeted outreach to underrepresented communities. The district also collaborated with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce to gather input from local businesses on the skills and qualities they seek in graduates. Although the district offers opportunities for input through school committee meetings and events, such as open meetings about using Yondr pouches, lockable containers for student cellphones, in the 2023-2024 school year, the focus has largely been on the general community. An area for growth is improving communication and transparency with all stakeholders, including underrepresented groups.

The district employs two family and community engagement liaisons, who families explained play a significant role in fostering communication between families and schools. According to the district’s family and school partnership webpage, the liaisons “serve as a bridge between families and classrooms, maintaining open lines of communication, hosting workshops and events to support families, and offering resources.” Despite these efforts, family focus group participants reported mixed experiences with parent engagement. Some families noted good opportunities for involvement, such as volunteering in the PBIS program, parent advisory committees, and the superintendent’s advisory councils. In addition, parents and district staff noted that parents participate on various committees, including the District Leadership Council, and can provide feedback using the superintendent’s “What’s on Your Mind?” Google form, which allows students and parents to share

concerns or suggestions when issues are not resolvable at the building level. However, other families felt that they have limited opportunities for engagement, particularly at the high school level.

Focus group discussions also highlighted the need for more timely engagement with stakeholders, consistent information sharing, and updates on district improvement goals. Families expressed concerns about communication, particularly in the upper grades, where they felt engagement often occurred only when problems arose. Some parents mentioned delays in administrative responses to their concerns, whereas others pointed to inconsistencies in the sharing of information. Families expressed a need for greater transparency, clarity, and consistency in communication. Similarly, school committee members suggested that the district could better communicate progress toward district improvement goals. They proposed more frequent updates to staff, students, and families regarding the district's progress on the improvement plan, noting that more transparency in this area could strengthen community engagement.

Recommendations

- *The district should expand and diversify engagement opportunities—such as offering flexible meeting times and broadening outreach strategies—to ensure all families, including those with scheduling constraints or who are underrepresented, can meaningfully participate in school and district decision-making.*
- *The district should develop and implement consistent, accessible communication strategies to regularly share progress on improvement plans with families and the broader community.*
- *The district should further investigate barriers to recruiting and retaining diverse leaders and implement strategies that address these barriers.*
- *The district should intentionally engage underrepresented groups in decision-making by implementing targeted outreach and inclusive communication strategies to ensure all stakeholder voices are reflected in district initiatives.*

Curriculum and Instruction

This section examines the extent to which district leaders have established a shared instructional vision, anchored in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, that guides all curricular and instructional decisions toward equitable outcomes for all students. It 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 in Northbridge.

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

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Instructional Leadership	■ The district has systems in place to implement, monitor, and continuously improve the instructional vision and related initiatives.	■ Integrating culturally and linguistically sustaining practices into professional development and the classroom
Curriculum and Instructional Materials	■ The district has a formal curricular review process, staggered across subjects through 2029.	■ Ensuring consistent sharing and accessibility of all high-quality grade-level materials
Equitable Practices and Access	■ Across schools in the district, several academic interventions are available to support students ■ All schools have dedicated weekly time to implement targeted interventions. ■ The district offers students rigorous learning experiences across all levels through programs and activities.	■ Improving the implementation of supports for English Learners and Students with Disabilities
Effective Instruction and Curricular Implementation	■ District and school improvement plans focus on empowering students to make decisions based on their experiences and values through increased Voice and Choice.	■ Providing students opportunities for higher order thinking, deeper understanding of content, and content-focused dialogue

Instructional Leadership

The director of curriculum and instruction oversees curriculum and instruction in the district. As outlined in the *district strategic plan 2024-2027* and the *Northbridge Public Schools Curriculum Review Process* documents, the director receives support from district leaders, school-level instructional coaches, school leaders, department chairs, and teachers. Together, these staff collaborate to guide and make decisions about curriculum and instruction for the district.

According to the superintendent, principals, and teachers, the district has a clear instructional vision that centers the needs and experiences of students. As described in the *2024-2027 District Strategic Plan*, Northbridge's vision is for students to be confident, empathetic, and responsible individuals who achieve personal success and contribute to society and their communities. The

district's strategic plan also states that the district seeks to empower students to take an active role in their education. To achieve this vision, the district developed its strategic initiative, Voice and Choice, which emphasizes designing and implementing instructional pathways, lessons, and learning environments tailored to students' individual needs, interests, and learning styles. In focus groups, teachers reported being aware of the Voice and Choice initiative and agreed that the district is integrating student choice throughout instruction.

Although the district's instructional vision prioritizes student-centered practices, integrating culturally and linguistically sustaining practices into professional development and the classroom is an area of growth for the district. Mid-range CLASS scores for Regard for Student Perspectives and feedback from student and teacher focus groups suggest that there are some opportunities for students to choose classroom activities that fit their interests but, student choice is limited. In focus groups, teachers agreed that there are inconsistencies in the implementation of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices. One teacher explained how strategies to support historically underserved populations such as low-income families and students of color were discussed but not implemented. In focus groups, students shared that although the books they are reading in their English language arts class teach them important lessons, students do not directly relate to the books. These concerns about student-centered practices appear in the Regard for Student Perspectives ratings, which were in the middle range across school buildings. At this level, teachers often dominate classroom discussions, but at other times the teacher allows students to share ideas, although at a minimal level or for a short period of time. Student focus group participants also felt that the curriculum being taught is directly relevant to the exam instead of their interests. Additionally, a review of the district strategic plan reveals only one reference to culturally sustaining practices, and they do not appear in any school-level plans. School leaders acknowledge the need to further develop these practices and are prioritizing their own professional learning to better guide and support teachers. To build their capacity, leaders have engaged with resources such as Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, which informs their approach with teachers. Principals suggested that ongoing professional development, coupled with support for critically evaluating how diverse student groups may perceive instructional materials and texts, will help teachers implement culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.

The superintendent, school leaders, and director of curriculum and instruction agreed that the district has systems in place to implement, monitor, and continuously improve upon the instructional vision and related initiatives, which is a strength of the district. To support these systems, each school has an instructional leadership team, as confirmed by principals. These teams include special education teachers, English Learner teachers, general educators, and administrators. Focus groups and a document review suggest that the structure and responsibilities of these teams vary by school level, but they play a critical role in supporting the district's continuous improvement efforts. According to the meeting minutes and as explained by the director of curriculum and instruction, Northbridge has grade-level leaders and department heads who support departments and faculty, identify professional development opportunities, and assist with other needs as they arise. At the elementary level, grade-level leaders are responsible for addressing the needs of their grade, focusing on both curriculum and operational matters. In middle school, leadership teams support district initiatives, guide the rollout of new programs, and provide feedback to staff. At the high school level, leadership teams function as subject-area experts who oversee curriculum

implementation within their departments. Despite these differences, the district establishes consistency across schools with bimonthly meetings, common agendas, and the use of meeting minutes templates. Principals also agreed that the district sets expectations for the leadership team's authority and scope of work through an annual action plan with objectives, actions, benchmarks, and progress monitoring mechanisms. The 2024-2027 District Strategic Plan outlines the district's strategic objectives and includes benchmarks for each relevant initiative. According to meeting minutes and to the director of curriculum and instruction, the district sets clear expectations for the leadership teams so that their authority and responsibilities align with the broader goals of the district.

One key initiative is the district's focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), aligned with the Voice and Choice strategic objective. To assess UDL implementation, schools conduct learning walks, during which school and district leaders review classroom practices, collect data, and meet monthly to discuss findings. School and district leaders also attend common planning time (CPT) meetings to monitor the implementation of Voice and Choice across content areas. Although these systems are in place, the superintendent acknowledged that UDL principles are not consistently applied across classrooms. The superintendent also shared that while some teachers understand the importance of student agency, they may misinterpret the depth of choice, reducing it to choice boards. The superintendent explained that students "want more discussion-based, more inquiry-based, more group work, more authentic learning tasks, and more opportunity to choose." In focus groups, teachers explained that although the district has taught them how to implement choice into instruction through professional development activities such as choice boards, some teachers are still struggling to reflect on their inclusion of student-centered activities. Focus group participants recognized UDL as a key focus of professional development, but teachers in specialized areas noted the lack of tailored guidance for applying UDL to their specific subjects, with most support being general rather than subject matter specific. According to the district's strategic plan, the district is in the process of planning for implementation of a staff survey and ongoing training to address this gap.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

A strength of the district is its formal curricular review process, outlined in the *Northbridge Public Schools Curriculum Review Process* document. This formal review process follows a five-year cycle for evaluating curricula across all content areas. The process involves input from various stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, and the school committee. The district uses *CURATE* and *EdReports* to guide curricular decisions and follows established protocols for piloting new programs. The district documents all curriculum changes in Google Drive, and the school committee grants final approvals on all selected curricula.

District and school leaders agreed that they connect curricula and instructional materials to state standards and that the curricula selected meet the needs of all students within the district. One school leader explained that the district purchased the *Wonders* curriculum post-pandemic to increase rigor and improve virtual accessibility for all students. Elementary teachers also explained how curriculum selection is an evolving process. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, committees would explore new curricula, with teachers visiting other schools or piloting programs. For example, when implementing the *Self-Regulated Strategy Development* (SRSD) writing program, teachers

researched the program through school visits and collaboration with other educators. However, the adoption of programs such as *Wonders* for ELA and *Reveal Math* in 2020 was driven by the shift to remote and hybrid learning, which did not allow time for an in-depth review process. Despite the rapid adoption, teachers could still provide feedback after the initial implementation. In response to this feedback, the district introduced *Enhanced Core Reading Instruction* (ECRI) as an attempt to close the reading gap and further support the phonics component of the *Wonders* curriculum. When *GoMath* did not meet the district's needs for remote and hybrid learning, teachers' feedback led to the switch to *Reveal Math*.

The middle school level also follows the district's formal curricular review process, with teachers highlighting adjustments based on classroom needs. For instance, after evaluating some *McGraw-Hill* options, teachers found its science and social studies curricula did not effectively engage students, prompting a search for alternatives, such as *Investigating History* (in the pilot stage) and *OpenSciEd*. The director of curriculum and instruction also noted that teachers felt the *StudySync* ELA curriculum used during remote learning was not a good fit for their district because of its structure, content that did not fully engage the students, and heavy reliance on worksheets, which did not foster the collaborative learning expected with the return to in-person instruction. Based on this feedback, the district returned to a "homegrown" curriculum for middle school, which has revisions to scopes and sequences documented within Google Drive and is continually revised through discussions during teachers' CPT to better meet students' needs.

In alignment with the curricular review process and as shared on the district's curriculum platform, Northbridge empowers educators to develop and adapt curricula and instructional materials, a practice most prevalent at the middle and high school levels. School staff explained that teachers develop curricula by creating Northbridge-specific resources and reviewing and updating these materials during their CPT. The director of curriculum and instruction also noted that curricula were implemented with fidelity, and the district also implements a process known as "Northbridge-ifying", in which teachers review published curricula and lessons during CPT and adjust, combine, or cut curricular content to better meet students' needs. Elementary and middle school teachers report not being directly involved in reviewing curricula, but they still maintain autonomy in creating supplemental materials to enhance student learning. In addition, high school teachers mentioned that all subjects use teacher-created units, and they have the flexibility to develop their curricula using a variety of sources and texts, refining courses in alignment with district standards. Notably, the high school uses a similar process as the middle school for reviewing curricula, as it relies primarily on homegrown curricula. High school teachers explained that they use their CPT meetings to continuously update their scopes, sequences, and curriculum maps and align curricular materials to district standards.

An area of growth for the district is consistently sharing homegrown instructional materials and making them accessible to all students and teachers. As part of the district's approach to teacher autonomy in developing and adapting curriculum, the district encourages educators to share their materials on the Northbridge Curriculum Drive. This platform helps the district monitor and evaluate curriculum quality. However, although considerable progress has occurred in uploading curricula for Grades K-8, sharing materials at the high school level remains inconsistent. District leaders reported challenges in accessing high school curricula, limiting the district's ability to monitor and review what is happening at the high school level.

Furthermore, most teachers report having access to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), but they have concerns about whether these resources adequately support the diverse needs of students, particularly English Learners and students with individualized education programs (IEPs). One special education teacher expressed concerns about the curricular review process, noting that despite their involvement, the resources seemed to be primarily geared toward general education. School leaders also noted that special education teachers expressed a need for more support in implementing a new science curriculum at the middle school level, so that the curriculum adequately meets the needs of students with IEPs. Teachers supporting English Learners highlighted the challenge of creating their own curricula given a lack of resources tailored to their students. Although they have access to the District Curriculum Drive, they often adapt materials to match students' English Language Development (ELD) levels, such as scaffolding grade-level content aligned with ELA class topics. Table 4 summarizes the status of all districtwide curricula in Northbridge.

Table 4. Curricula Used in Northbridge

Grade level(s)	Subject	Curriculum	Type	CURATE rating	EdReports rating
K-3	ELA	Enhanced Core Reading Instruction	Supplemental	NR	NR
K-5	ELA	Wonders 2020	Comprehensive	ME	ME
K-5	ELA/Writing	Handwriting Without Tears	Supplemental	NR	NR
K-5	ELA	Corrective Reading and Phonics Intervention by Benchmark Education	Supplemental	NR	NR
K-5	Math	McGraw-Hill Reveal Math	Comprehensive	PM	ME
K-5	Math	ST Math	Supplemental	NR	NR
K-5	Science	Mystery Science	Comprehensive	NR	NR
5	Social Studies	McGraw-Hill Impact Social Studies	Supplemental	NR	NR
5-7	Social Studies	Investigating History ^a	Supplemental	NR	NR
5	Social Studies	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
6-8	ELA	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
6-8	Math	i-Ready	Comprehensive	ME	ME
6-8	Math	Zearn	Supplemental	PM	ME
6-8	Science	OpenSciEd ^a	Comprehensive	ME	ME
6-8	Social Studies	History Alive!	Comprehensive	NR	NR
9-12	ELA	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
9-12	Math	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
9-12	Science	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR
9-12	Social Studies	Teacher Developed	Comprehensive	NR	NR

Note. ME = meets expectations; PM = partially meets expectations; NR = not rated; CURATE = CURriculum RATings by Teachers. ^a OpenSciEd and Investigating History are DESE developed or informed.

According to the timeline outline in the *Northbridge Public Schools Curriculum Review Process* document, art, library, music, and health/physical education curricula are currently being reviewed

by district and school leaders; social studies curricula are currently being piloted throughout the district; mathematics, ELA, and science, technology, and engineering curricula are currently being fully implemented throughout the district. Mathematics and ELA will enter the evaluation phase in 2025-2026, where data will be used to assess the implementation of the curricula. Teachers and school leaders agreed that the district generally selects, implements, and aligns instructional materials vertically and horizontally across all tiers of instruction. Teachers noted that they use their CPT meetings to align instructional materials vertically, but there remains room for improvement in aligning materials horizontally since teachers revise their materials to specifically fit the needs of students within their classrooms. School leaders mentioned that the district is rewriting curriculum maps to improve alignment, and they purchased Benchmark Education, a new curriculum to help with tiered interventions.

District staff added that the district provides formal districtwide professional learning opportunities to support effective curriculum implementation for teachers across all grade levels. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers agreed that the district provides professional learning to support them in implementing HQIM, and the district collects input from them on the types of professional learning offered.

Equitable Practices and Access

Across the district, several academic interventions are available to support students, which is a strength of the district. School leaders reported that the following academic interventions are available in ELA and mathematics:

- Elementary: WIN blocks (Tier 2) and Benchmark Education (Tier 3)
- Middle: RAMS blocks (Tier 2) and Title I intervention (Tier 3)
- High: Small groups (Tier 2 and 3), RAMS blocks (Tier 2 and 3), individualized instruction (Tier 3), and the CONNECT Program (Tier 3)

Students across all grade levels participate in a WIN (What I Need) block, also referred to as a RAMS block in the higher grades (named for the district mascot). At the elementary level, academic interventions, including the Corrective Reading and Phonics Intervention by Benchmark Education, occur during WIN blocks. According to district leaders, teachers, parents, and students, the WIN block supports elementary students in need of individualized and small-group support in reading, writing, and mathematics.

At the middle school level, academic supports occur during RAMS intervention blocks and include Tier 1 instruction in ELA and mathematics, i-Ready, Zearn Math, and teacher-created materials. Middle and high school students have a RAMS block twice a week, which is a half-hour long advisory block that holistically supports students in need of individualized and small-group support. The high school uses RAMS blocks, afterschool help sessions, coteaching, and teacher-created materials to support academic needs. In addition, at the high school, small-group instruction and the CONNECT program provide more intensive academic support for students who require it.

The district pairs students with individualized supports and offers a variety of academic courses and extracurricular opportunities. Sufficient staff and time are allocated to implement and adapt Tier 2

and Tier 3 interventions to meet students' needs, and schools receive support to develop schedules that provide teachers with sufficient time to support students who benefit from Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. According to the director of curriculum and instruction, the WIN block was changed to a RAMS block for middle and high school students because the WIN block focused more on improving literacy while RAMS blocks provide more well-rounded, dedicated time for students to receive support, and students have more autonomy in determining what supports they may receive. Students are assigned to a RAMS block and can be pulled during the block to finish missing assignments, meet with guidance counselors, or receive individualized Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. All school buildings have dedicated weekly time to implement targeted interventions, which is a strength of the district.

Students and their families agreed that the district intentionally engages them in decision-making and the delivery of tiered supports. Parents reported that students can request extra help during their RAMS block. One parent explained that their children found the RAMS block to be helpful because it is easy for them to schedule additional support and not interrupt their regular classroom learning. During the RAMS block, if students do not require academic intervention, are not completing assignments, or a teacher has not requested additional support for students, they can opt for these extracurricular activities. Additionally, middle school teachers explained that the RAMS block occurs four days a week, and students can receive Tier 2 support directly within the classroom or be pulled out to receive Tier 3 support. A high school teacher noted that the RAMS block is an opportunity to support a variety of students, and it feels less overwhelming to provide support during this time. Middle and high school students noted that they have the option of using one of their RAMS block days for extracurricular opportunities. One high school student mentioned learning guitar during their RAMS block, whereas a middle school student reported being able to choose if they want to stay with their current RAMS teacher for the advisory period or use the RAMS time for art, technology, band, or chorus.

In addition, the district has an *MTSS Guidebook* that details how it applies MTSS to implement academic interventions and progress monitoring procedures that support access to and movement throughout all three tiers of instruction. Principals and other staff reported that they use attendance data and benchmark data from assessments such as MCAS and DIBELS (Dynamic indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) to select academic intervention materials that align with the common curriculum, and they leverage student support teams (SSTs) to match students to Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. According to one district leader, SSTs follow a manual to match students to Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions based on a regular review of student data. In addition, the district monitors the fidelity of its MTSS implementation by reviewing failure rates at the middle and high school levels and through regular data meetings at the elementary level.

The district provides a range of services and placements, such as Tier 1 instruction, pull-out supports, push-in supports, full inclusion classrooms, and substantially separate programs. A review of the 2023-2024 DESE profile revealed that the district has 7.6 percent of students with IEPs in substantially separate classrooms, which is 5.6 percent lower than the state target of 13.2 percent or less. A review of the 2021 New England Association of Schools and Colleges progress report also indicated that Northbridge High School special education teachers are working to improve their communication with classroom teachers and provide the necessary supports. Furthermore, parents expressed concerns regarding special education, citing distrust in the special education department

and belief that their students were not receiving the necessary services. Additionally, a district leader explained that a focus area for the district is how it monitors and evaluates the effectiveness and quality of its ESL and special education programs. They mentioned that although teachers have certification in Sheltered English Immersion, these practices are not consistently applied throughout the district. These concerns suggest that an area for growth for Northbridge is improving the implementation of supports for English Learners and Students with Disabilities, so that they have access to the services they need.

Principals and other officials within the district reported using data to continuously monitor the experiences and outcomes of all students and using student feedback to adjust coursework offerings, enrichment opportunities, and school-level systems. The superintendent and other district leaders noted that the district is currently improving its process of disaggregating student data by student group. School leaders also reported using additional curricula for English Learner students or Students with Disabilities, including Social Thinking (social-emotional learning curricula) and district-developed curricula.

Northbridge offers students rigorous learning experiences across all levels through a variety of programs and activities, which is a strength of the district. According to district leaders and the district website, Northbridge Elementary School offers elective courses and extracurriculars such as chorus, band, flag football, and Girls on the Run. Northbridge Middle School also offers a variety of electives and extracurriculars, including band, chorus, dance, LGBTQ+ club, broadcasting club, Makerspace, robotics club, Girls Who Code, the National Junior Honor Society, ski club, student council, tabletop gaming club, and the yearbook committee. A review of the *Northbridge High School Program of Studies* indicated that the high school provides a wide range of course offerings and academic pathways to accommodate diverse student needs and interests. This coursework includes content areas not subject to statewide testing, advanced courses, electives, and CTE courses. Northbridge High School provides courses across three levels: AP, honors, and college preparatory. According to the *Northbridge High School Program of Studies*, the school offers 12 AP courses across ELA, mathematics, science, history, psychology, government, world languages, and art. Northbridge High School also offers multiple CTE pathways in which students can gain exposure to certain career fields and certificate opportunities in health science, art, technology, business, music, social science, nursing, world language, and engineering.

Effective Instruction and Curricular Implementation

As outlined in the district strategic plan and SIPs, the district focuses on empowering students to make decisions based on their experiences and values through increased Voice and Choice, which is a strength of the district. Teachers from across the district agreed that the district provides support for developing a safe and supportive learning environment in which all students can engage in academic content. These supports include a districtwide emphasis on academic discourse and having students exercise agency over their learning. A high school teacher commented on these supports, noting that the district has a “serious push towards voice and choice and making sure that [teachers] are scaffolding properly and giving [students] the space that they need to make mistakes and to ask questions.” Middle and high school students also agreed, explaining that they have opportunities to explain their thinking through classroom discussions and roundtables, but teachers often lead discussions. In addition to student focus group responses, instructional observations

suggest that teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities emphasize students' points of view for short periods of time or only at a minimal level. Instructional observation ratings for Regard for Student Perspectives in the middle range for all grade bands (ranging between 3.1 and 3.4) suggest that students have some opportunities to exercise autonomy and that teachers allow some students to share ideas at times. However, these ratings also suggest that the implementation of practices discussed in focus groups may be somewhat inconsistent or not as deeply embedded in everyday classroom instruction.

A review of the Northbridge Curriculum Drive reveals that the district has curricular implementation guides that set expectations and support educators in implementing lessons that reflect grade-level standards and WIDA ELD standards. Teachers and other officials reported that the district requires teachers to identify content objectives for all lessons, and the district upholds the expectation that teachers identify strategies for providing supports that enable students to engage in grade-level content. Teachers were not required to identify language objectives at the time of the onsite review, but the superintendent noted that this is an upcoming priority for the district. Students agreed, adding that teachers have different styles of instruction but that courses generally have the same order and structure.

According to Northbridge teachers, the district mostly supports them in implementing evidence-based instructional practices by providing evidence-based professional learning focused on student voice and choice. For example, a middle school teacher shared that their recent professional development focused on strategies that emphasized the voice of every student, and that during the class, teachers were asked to review their lessons and look for opportunities to incorporate more student voice. A high school teacher noted that the district is encouraging teachers to hold high expectations and to have activities that allow students to show higher-order thinking. However, instructional observation ratings for Instructional Dialogue in the low-middle range for Grades 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 (4.1, 3.3, and 2.8, respectively) indicate that students have inconsistent opportunities to actively participate in extended, content-focused dialogues at the secondary level. Likewise, some students reported that some discussions contain only simple question-response exchanges between the teacher and students. A student explained how this occurs more often in their mathematics class, with the teacher asking only simple "yes" or "no" questions. Instructional observations and student focus group responses suggest that providing opportunities to promote higher-order thinking, deeper understanding of content, and content-focused dialogue is an area for growth for Northbridge.

Recommendations

- *The district should strengthen the integration of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices by embedding them into professional development, instructional planning, and curriculum.*
- *The district should clarify expectations around sharing curricular materials amongst teachers and develop a system to support collaboration.*
- *The district should improve supports for English Learners and Students with Disabilities by strengthening implementation of evidence-based practices, monitoring program effectiveness, and strengthening trust with families through clear communication and accountability.*

- *The district should partner with its school leaders and teachers to understand how faculty can better promote higher-order thinking, deep understanding, and content-focused dialogue.*

Assessment

This section examines the extent to which, through the establishment of strategic data and assessment systems, the district supports a robust, data-centered culture that advances 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, as well as how, by analyzing assessment results and other data, educators 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 Northbridge.

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

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
Data Collection	■ The district collects academic and nonacademic data from multiple sources to inform a comprehensive understanding of student performance. ■ Northbridge has a process for systematically reviewing its assessment tools for bias.	
Data Use and Culture	■ The district has a shared vision for data use across district, school, and classroom leaders.	
Sharing Data	■ The district has systems and processes for communicating student achievement to families. ■ District leaders and teachers implement transparent and easily accessible grading systems across the district.	■ Establishing consistent, districtwide expectations for student performance goal-setting

Data Collection

The district collects academic and nonacademic data from multiple sources to inform a comprehensive understanding of each student's performance, which is a strength of the district. The director of curriculum and instruction is responsible for assessment in the district and receives support from school principals. The district gathers multiple types of academic (e.g., DIBELS, MCAS, Wonders, Developmental Spelling Inventory, Reveal Math, SRSD Writing Rubric, Imagine Galileo) and nonacademic (e.g., attendance, behavior referrals) student data. These data are available for both district and school leaders and teachers to review on a Looker Studio data dashboard. In focus group discussions, school leaders, teachers, and district staff shared that the collected data provide a comprehensive understanding of each student. For example, one district leader described using academic performance data and behavior referrals to inform conversations with students and families so that students have the correct supports. In addition, teachers reported that they have support in using data to form a comprehensive picture of the students in their classes; they have access to district- and classroom-level academic data and use district-created data protocols to analyze benchmark data.

According to school and district staff, Northbridge strategically selects and implements formal and informal assessments that align with instructional content; however, the publicly available

assessment plan on the district website has no updates for the 2024-2025 school year. Northbridge administers DIBELS to assess student reading in grades K-5 three times per year. In focus groups, district leaders and teachers explained that although there are no district common assessments used at the high school level, the district uses the online assessment tool Galileo to implement screeners and benchmark assessments for ELA and mathematics for grades 2-8. When the district implements a set curriculum, teachers use the formative and summative assessments included in the curriculum and develop supplemental assessments. For subjects and grade levels without a set curriculum, particularly at the high school level, district leaders and teachers noted that teachers have autonomy in creating common assessments that align with Massachusetts standards. District leaders and teachers also explained that teachers across all grades provide informal assessment opportunities in the classroom through exit tickets, whiteboard responses, and chapter assessments.

Northbridge has a process for systematically reviewing its assessment tools for bias, which is a strength of the district. When describing the assessment review and selection process, district leaders shared that they reviewed disaggregated data and found previous OpenSciEd science assessments to be challenging for Students with Disabilities to access, thus district staff could not accurately analyze the data because the assessment questions did not reveal a complete picture of student performance and the data were not collected authentically. To correct this issue, district leaders collaborated with special education teachers to make the assessments accessible and observed other districts' practices and brought them back to Northbridge. Likewise, school and district staff reported that the district collects feedback from teachers and uses the input to refine its assessment strategy. An example of this is when teachers develop their own common summative assessments, they review colleagues' assessments during their CPT and share feedback with one another and their department chair. District leaders occasionally attend the CPT meetings and provide additional feedback and support.

Data Use and Culture

In focus groups and interviews, district and school staff communicated a shared understanding of the connection between data collection and use for the district's broader instructional vision and strategic priorities. District leaders reported that they review benchmark assessment data quarterly to look for trends, and teachers are to spend time reviewing student data during their weekly CPT or their monthly PLC meetings. One district leader noted, "[The] elementary school has . . . a big culture around the formative assessments [and] the exit tickets. They're constantly . . . looking for evidence of learning." School leaders described how they use the Looker Studio data dashboard to review student data and identify trends in failure rates. Teachers across grade levels shared similar sentiments and explained that they use district-created data protocols to support their analysis of student data; their SST referrals integrate academic and nonacademic data to inform a comprehensive understanding of a student. When discussing how the district provides guidance and tools for data analysis during CPT, one high school teacher noted that "they give us all those guiding principles but trust us to make those sound decisions as a group." The district's development of a shared vision for data use across district, school, and classroom leaders is a notable strength.

According to the superintendent, Northbridge collects multiple data points and disaggregates student group data to inform district planning, decision-making, policies, and practices. For example, disaggregated attendance data, discipline data, failure rates, and community survey data influenced

the development of the district's strategic plan. District leaders also reported using disaggregated attendance data to inform their root cause analysis of student behavior and influence the district's focus on increasing the graduation rates of Students with Disabilities.

According to school leaders and teachers, the district provides educators with access to relevant data and the resources necessary to understand and analyze it. District and school leaders explained that the district supports teacher understanding and the use of data through goal-setting and resources such as data dashboards, professional development, data analysis protocols, assessment rubrics, and built-in collaborative time. Similarly, teachers reported having all the relevant data and resources to analyze student data to inform classroom instruction. District leaders and teachers reported that teachers have access to classroom-level academic data, DIBELS data, and behavioral data through the district data dashboard and through their CPT and PLC meetings.

According to district leaders, district and school staff regularly use course grades, attendance, SST reports, and office referrals to evaluate students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. Some data, including office referrals and suspension data, are disaggregated by specific categories, such as student disability status. In focus groups, school staff further explained that the district sets expectations regarding student data review and developed structures that facilitate regular data review cycles and adjustments to instruction. The district provides specific protocols for teachers to review student data, including classroom-level data and universal screener results, that teachers are to use during their collaboration time. Teachers noted that the protocols are useful and that they use them to help guide data discussions. District leaders and school staff also reported using data to evaluate student needs and provide appropriate interventions. For example, according to the superintendent, elementary students who had lower DIBELS assessment scores were placed in WIN blocks for standards-based or skill-based reading support. The district collects and analyzes multiple data points to inform district planning and decision-making.

Sharing Data

District leaders have set expectations and established systems for communicating student performance to families, which is an area of strength for the district. According to the Northbridge strategic plan, the district highlights that they will “create systems to regularly inform and educate parents and the community about academic performance levels, attendance rates, discipline trends, school transitions, and other data relevant to NPS.” The district primarily uses Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, and ClassDojo to share data with students and families. In addition, teachers and families noted that the district regularly communicates evidence of student performance. The district's data system, Infinite Campus, enables families to monitor student academic, student attendance, and biographical data. For secondary students, families also have access to in-progress grades, assignments, and schedules. At the elementary level, parents receive additional updates through ClassDojo, which helps keep them informed about their child's progress. Regardless of grade level, all families receive report cards: elementary families receive them at the end of each term, whereas middle and high school families receive them at both mid-semester and the end of the term.

Discussions with students, teachers, and district staff revealed that Northbridge expects all students to engage in goal setting and data review in developmentally appropriate ways, yet variability exists in the application of these expectations across grade levels, which highlights the need to establish

consistent, districtwide expectations for student performance goal setting as an area of growth. At the elementary level, teachers review DIBELS results at the beginning and end of the year, and students use these data to set and track their goals. One district leader shared that first-grade students independently track their progress on weekly tests and ST Math puzzle completions. At the middle school, school leaders hosted a grade-level assembly to highlight the school's MCAS performance and performance in areas such as sports and band, aiming to show students their potential. Students then reviewed schoolwide MCAS data, reflecting on the gap between their performance and their capabilities. Teachers followed up with individual conferences to set student goals for the year. One middle school teacher noted that the district evolved its approach to goal setting, moving beyond just creating goals to empowering students to choose the steps necessary to reach them. At the high school level, goal setting and data sharing primarily occur during advisory periods and less frequently during classes. However, teachers acknowledged that these practices do not have consistent application across the district.

As part of the district's efforts to further increase student agency, teacher and student focus group participants shared that secondary students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning through Infinite Campus, which allows them to review their grades. Educators agreed that room for improvement exists in engaging all students in understanding their performance data and setting goals. Furthermore, some high school students noted that they do not always receive feedback from their teachers on how they can improve their grades. Middle school teachers also explained that even though students receive timely feedback through Infinite Campus and have assessment rubrics to refer to for their benchmarks, feedback on their performance is primarily about their grades and does not specifically describe how students can improve. Teachers and students noted that students can request and receive academic support for themselves during their RAMS block. Students also reported that some teachers offer opportunities for grade revisions and provide detailed written feedback on assignments and essays.

District leaders and teachers implement transparent and easily accessible grading systems across the district, which is another strength. At the elementary level, student performance is assessed using standards-based grading, as outlined in district documents. One parent focus group participant shared a feeling of confidence in their understanding of their child's academic, behavioral, and emotional progress, noting the clarity and simplicity of the standards-based report cards. At the middle school level, teachers use a rubric-based grading policy, which is also outlined in district documents. This grading system specifies the assessment of students across various categories, including assessments, projects, and classwork, providing a framework for both students and families to understand expectations. Northbridge High School does not have a publicly available grading policy but provides rubrics on its website that outline expectations for academic performance, as well as social, civic, and research skills. In addition, teachers report that the ELA, science, and mathematics departments use their CPTs to align and develop common grading practices. For example, one teacher shared that the mathematics department recently reviewed a common summative assessment, with each teacher grading it individually before coming together to calibrate and confirm consistency in their grading.

According to district leaders, dedicated staff review and monitor the digital platforms that collect, store, and share student data to comply with student data privacy laws and regulations. In addition, district staff reported that the district offers professional learning for staff concerning student data

privacy law, policies, and best practices for safeguarding student information. School leaders and teachers agreed that they have had professional learning on this topic. The district also maintains a detailed technology policy.

Recommendations

- *The district should establish expectations for setting performance goals with students and partner with faculty to implement these practices districtwide.*

Human Resources and Professional Development

This section examines the extent to which the district has 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 6 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in human resources and professional development in Northbridge.

Table 6. 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 teachers' association, district, and school leaders are communicative and collaborative when addressing staff disciplinary issues.	■ Having appropriate expertise and staffing to effectively manage human resources functions ■ Adopting and implementing human resources policies and procedures
Staffing	■ The district highlights areas of strength through the evaluation process for teachers and administrators. ■ Northbridge makes a concerted effort to foster a positive work environment across the district.	■ Developing a clear plan for recruitment and retention ■ Articulating areas for improvement for all staff in evaluations ■ Completing summative evaluations for all administrators
Professional Learning	■ Northbridge has an established mentoring program and onboarding processes for new staff.	■ Providing professional development that is relevant and directly applicable to instruction ■ Providing consistent opportunities for teachers to collaborate across different subject areas and grade levels

Human Resources Infrastructure, Policies, and Practices

Northbridge uses Infinite Campus to maintain employee records and demographic data, and SchoolSpring to track hiring. According to a district administrator, the district posts vacancies to SchoolSpring and the district website. This system also provides data to school leaders, which informs decisions on staffing and budget planning. In addition, staff attendance records from Frontline are helpful during contract negotiations. Although staff lists are accessible through the platform, other essential employment information, such as benefits, W-2 forms, and employee records, is not available online; they are available only from the district office. Likewise, schools receive pay stubs in printed form on a weekly or biweekly basis. However, the superintendent noted that this lack of digital access is a town-level issue that the district does not have control over.

In addition to a lack of digital access, further gaps exist in the district's human resources infrastructure. Northbridge does not have a dedicated human resources director, and the supervisor of administrative services manages most human resources functions, with support from the superintendent, and district leaders acknowledged they could benefit from additional HR staff. The superintendent shared that she took law classes to inform how she can better support the human resources department. Still, increasing the level of expertise and staffing available to support human resources is an area for growth.

These concerns are further compounded by the absence of coherently integrated human resources procedures and an employee handbook that is adhered to by staff, which is an area of growth for the district. Although the district administrators created a staff reference manual, the teachers' contract language does not address the manual or the policies it outlines, and the union clarified that staff do not have to follow the manual because it is not required by their contract. One district leader noted that the "staff [reference manual] has been on hold for years" because the union has not been open to negotiating the language and policies it lays out, which reflects the ongoing challenges in formalizing human resources procedures.

A district leader and the superintendent stated that the district has procedures to verify licensure and handle grievances and staff misconduct. For consistency in these processes, principals receive regular training, including annual sessions with the district's lawyer on policy updates. Licensure verification is conducted through the state Educator Licensure and Renewal website, and Infinite Campus tracks staff credentials when onboarding new hires.

Members of the teachers' association shared that district and school leaders are communicative and collaborative when addressing staff disciplinary issues, which they consider a district strength. When issues arise, administrators often reach out to union representatives for informal mediation or discussions before matters escalate to formal disciplinary actions. For example, if a teacher is having a rough day, principals may ask union members to step in and help facilitate a conversation. Association members described school administrators as consistently inviting them to meetings or sharing concerns to collaboratively find resolutions. Furthermore, the teachers' association and the superintendent hold monthly "housekeeping" meetings to discuss teacher concerns and find solutions. According to the teachers' association, there is no formal manual outlining specific responses to teacher behaviors. However, the superintendent explained the district's grievance process, noting that staff are aware of the procedures, as detailed in the *Agreement Between the School Committee and Teachers' Association of Northbridge* document.

Staffing

Much like other districts nationwide, Northbridge is facing significant challenges related to educator retention and recruitment, with both staff and community members expressing concerns about the effectiveness of current strategies. According to teacher focus group participants, the main reason staff stay in Northbridge is the relationships they've built with colleagues. Many teachers also emphasized the strong sense of community and collaboration, which helps them feel supported. Although strong relationships have kept some staff in the district, the commonly cited reason staff leave the district is salary, with several participants mentioning the district's pay scale—particularly

when compared with neighboring districts—as a primary factor that drives teachers to seek other opportunities.

Focus group discussions revealed that the development and implementation of a clear plan for teacher recruitment and retention plan is an area for growth within the district. Both the superintendent and other district-level staff confirmed that the district currently lacks formal, structured retention strategies. Although efforts such as positive recognition, supportive leadership, and professional development have been implemented to retain staff individually, these measures are not part of a broader, strategic approach. In addition, although the district recognizes the need for diversifying its workforce, these current efforts do not specifically focus on improving diversity within the staff.

Further complicating the district's staffing challenges are concerns about the effectiveness of its recruitment policies and processes. According to the human resources focus group, despite attending job fairs, reaching out to colleges, and distributing information to parents and retirees, Northbridge continues to struggle with recruitment and filling open positions. The superintendent highlighted this challenge, and members of the teachers' association echoed similar concerns. They noted that high administrative and staff turnover, particularly in specialized roles, exacerbates the issue and underscores the need for more effective recruitment strategies.

As recruitment challenges persist, concerns about retention continue to grow within the district. Family focus group participants shared that their children have not had consistent teachers, with one parent noting that from kindergarten through fourth grade, their child had only one teacher who stayed the entire school year. Another parent expressed concern that the elementary school lacks the necessary staff to properly support and monitor students. School leaders echoed this sentiment, pointing out that the elementary school is facing staff shortages given budget constraints. The superintendent noted the recent departure of a high school teacher, and the school committee acknowledged that the district's "budget needs adjustments to retain valued staff members."

Northbridge has clearly defined hiring responsibilities for district and school leaders. District staff are responsible for creating job descriptions, defining position details, and posting job openings. District-level administrators handle the recruitment of specialized staff such as nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, and board-certified behavior analysts, whereas school-level administrators manage the hiring of teachers, instructional assistants, behavior technicians, assistant principals, deans, and secretaries. New hires participate in a two-day orientation that covers curriculum, platforms, and evaluation handbooks. They also are assigned mentors (see Professional Learning) and receive an onboarding packet. If new hires join later in the year, they receive additional support from their department chair or team leader.

Principals have full autonomy over staffing decisions, including the use of SchoolSpring to review résumés and manage initial interview rounds. Principals are also responsible for ensuring that staffing choices align with the district's budget. Despite this autonomy, principals face significant challenges in filling vacancies. One principal noted having six open positions but only two applicants and struggling to staff classroom teaching positions and substitutes. In addition, principals emphasized the need for more special education staff to support implementation of the new science curriculum and additional staff to assist students who are dysregulated and those coping with trauma.

Further discussion in the human resources focus group and the superintendent interview revealed that Northbridge struggles to equitably distribute licensed, effective educators across its schools. Interviewees highlighted the challenges of balancing the placement of educators across grade levels and content areas. Despite these challenges, Northbridge remains focused on addressing the current year's student needs, adjusting staffing as necessary. One way Northbridge attempts to provide equitable staffing is by intentionally placing Students with Disabilities in classrooms in which they can receive support from licensed staff. Although the district strives to meet students' needs, the superintendent noted that the "biggest problem with equity is . . . our kids with the highest level of need do not have necessarily the most qualified people."

District records suggest that teacher evaluations are consistently completed using Vector Solutions. AIR used simple random sampling to select the sample of 10 percent of 143 teachers (15 teachers) due for summative evaluations for the 2023-2024 school year. All of the teachers selected for review (100 percent) had a summative evaluation available for review. All the teacher evaluations available for review were complete and did not omit required components, including a rating for each standard or an overall rating. Nearly all evaluation documents reviewed (93 percent) included a student learning SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goal and a professional practice SMART goal. All teacher progress toward their student learning and professional goals was evaluated. Nearly all evaluations reviewed (93 percent) included multiple sources of evidence, such as observations, student work samples, or other evidence to support progress toward student learning goals, professional learning goals, standards, and indicators. All summative evaluations included feedback for each standard and overall feedback related to the teacher's overall rating. All teacher evaluations included feedback naming strengths or practices the teacher should continue; however, less than half of the evaluations (47 percent) included feedback indicating areas of improvement.

District records suggest that administrator evaluations also are completed using Vector Solutions. Of the 11 administrative district staff who were due for a summative evaluation for the 2023-2024 school year, eight evaluations (73 percent) were available for review and complete with performance ratings and assessment of progress toward goals. Of the eight summative evaluations reviewed, all included student learning and professional practice SMART goals; however, only seven evaluations (88 percent) included a school improvement goal. All the evaluations reviewed included multiple sources of evidence to assess performance on summative evaluation standards and included feedback for each standard. All administrator evaluations reviewed included comments with specific, actionable feedback naming each administrator's strengths; however, only half of the evaluations (50 percent) reviewed identified areas of improvement for administrative district staff.

Taken together, the review of teacher and administrator evaluations highlights that a strength of the district is in highlighting areas of strength through the evaluation process for teachers and administrators. On the other hand, this evidence also highlights that an area for growth for the district is articulating areas for improvement for administrators and teachers to foster continuous growth and enhance their leadership effectiveness. In addition, slightly more than a quarter of the administrators who were due for a summative evaluation did not have a summative evaluation file, noting that another area of growth is the consistent completion of summative evaluations for all.

District leadership shows appreciation for staff through both informal gestures and specific events and awards. The teachers' association reported that the superintendent shows appreciation in other ways, such as leaving positive notes in teachers' mailboxes or organizing "Jeans Day" events. The district also tries to make staff feel valued through personal gestures, such as reaching out when staff are doing the right things or going above and beyond. They provide small tokens of appreciation, including private breakfasts, baked goods, and a special parking space for the week. Another notable example is the "Unsung Hero" award, introduced by the district six years ago. This nighttime event honors approximately 80 individuals each year, recognizing not only staff but also parents, community members, and custodians who contribute to the schools but often go unrecognized.

District leaders highlight Northbridge's concerted effort to build a positive district culture, which is a strength of the district. Northbridge hosts two major events each year. In the winter, a districtwide holiday event brings staff together for games and socializing to foster connections. In the spring, a professional development day is dedicated to staff wellness, offering activities such as yoga, massages, crafts, and a pitch tournament to help staff relax and bond. At the start of each year, districtwide lunches and games help build camaraderie, and district leaders believe that the staff eagerly anticipate these events. The focus on community building is also modeled at the building level, with each school having a "Culture Crew" to organize similar events. Teacher leaders agree that each building has a supportive culture in which staff can rely on one another for both personal and professional support, and they can also approach administrators who understand their concerns. Teachers also shared that Northbridge provides effective mental health and wellness support through its Employee Assistance Program.

In Northbridge, staff have several opportunities to advance in their careers, but the work responsibilities and salary may deter some from taking advantage of them. The teacher contract supports professional development by reimbursing the cost of one course – two for those without a master's degree – annually. In addition, the district encourages teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools, with some becoming champions of specific curricula. However, moving into a leadership role is not an appealing option for all teachers because it would mean a decrease in pay, teachers reported. According to the superintendent, to support staff advancement and improve recruitment and retention, Northbridge prioritizes promoting from within. This approach helps foster camaraderie among staff and is cost-effective. Leadership opportunities, such as instructional coach positions, are available, and the district's leadership council—which includes parents, administrators, and teachers—provides a platform for broader involvement. Furthermore, the district offers the Administrative Academy to support teachers interested in pursuing school leadership roles. Teachers seeking administrative certification receive support through monthly release time and the ability to count work hours toward the certification requirements. However, some focus group participants shared that advancing into administrative roles is less appealing for teachers, given salary reductions and increased responsibilities. Moreover, one teacher explained that even though they are qualified for administrative positions, they choose to remain in their current teaching role because the financial trade-off is too great.

Professional Learning

The district has systems and schedules for providing feedback as well as opportunities for coaching and professional development. The district provides a walkthrough rubric that guides school leadership in observation and feedback cycles. This form includes criteria for well-structured units and lesson design, instructional adjustments, student engagement, and addressing diverse student needs. The walkthrough rubric differs from the educator evaluation rubric, which includes four evaluation standards: Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment; Teaching All Students; Family and Community Engagement; and Professional Culture. District principals shared that district leaders actively participate in the observation and feedback process, supporting administrators and coaches in helping educators improve. School leaders compile aggregated data and maintain open lines of communication with district leaders, who provide input on areas of focus.

In their focus group discussions, teachers agreed that they receive regular feedback from school leaders, and school leaders use a clear evaluation and walkthrough schedule. The district also has a two-year mentoring program that includes the assignment of a mentor in the first year and 50 hours (about four days) of professional development experiences per year. However, teachers disagreed that the coaching and feedback they receive explicitly connects to the provided professional development. One teacher shared that the professional development opportunities, which vary by department, are not always relevant to current needs and “not necessarily ones that help us in the moment.” Teachers also expressed frustration around not being able to choose the professional development options they feel are most relevant to them with one saying that, depending on their department, “some [teachers] are being dictated or being told what [professional development] to do and others are being given more options.”

The district has a professional development committee, which includes staff members, such as teachers and school leaders, to help guide and shape professional learning opportunities. Teachers are invited to participate in faculty or PLC meetings, during which they can share what they have learned and request time to present to their colleagues. The teachers’ association highlighted the district’s “March Madness” professional development as a valued program. This event allows teachers to earn required professional development points (PDPs) for license renewal by participating in a variety of sessions, ranging from technology and special education to mindfulness and hobbies such as crocheting (though the latter does not count for PDPs). Teachers appreciate that the sessions are voluntary, in-house, and educator led, making them a cost-free way to fulfill PDP requirements. The program’s flexibility allows teachers to choose topics that address both personal and professional development needs—a widely regarded positive and accessible opportunity for staff. Across schools, teachers particularly value the chance to take on leadership roles by leading sessions.

Although the district’s professional development initiatives provide valuable learning opportunities for educators, ongoing concerns exist regarding the relevance and effectiveness of some offerings. Teachers expressed that certain sessions feel like mandatory “have-to” topics that do not directly benefit their classroom practices. Despite efforts to involve teachers in planning, there remains a sense that some professional development does not result in meaningful change. This disconnect between the intended goals of professional development and its practical impact in the classroom is a challenge for the district. District leaders acknowledged this concern but explained that several

sources—including MCAS student performance data, the DIBELS Universal Screener, the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, professional development needs assessments, the district strategic plan, and feedback from school and district staff—shape professional development offerings. The district’s professional development plan uses these sources to help shape and monitor the effectiveness of its offerings, but this does not align with teachers’ views of its usefulness in their classrooms. The professional development lead emphasized that the professional development plan is flexible and incorporates current initiatives such as Voice and Choice—which gives teachers greater flexibility in selecting professional development opportunities—and is reviewed every three to four years. Although teachers value flexibility, they feel that some sessions lack practical impact. An area for growth for the district is ensuring that professional development is consistently relevant and directly applicable to instruction.

In addition to professional development, the district provides collaborative planning through scheduled CPT and PLC meetings, though access to these opportunities varies. Principals reported that staff have scheduled time to collaborate across subject areas and grade levels, during weekly CPT and monthly PLCs, but some teachers explained that collaborative time is not consistently available to them. Teachers said that staff in the same grade level and content area have time to meet, but they must seek out meetings with teachers in other grades. In addition, the four ESL teachers in the district have limited PLC time and must “meet with teachers on the fly,” according to teacher focus group participants. Teachers also indicated that their district promotes collaborative planning and PLCs, which teacher focus group respondents said have focused on curriculum implementation in recent years. District staff and school leaders agreed, adding that principals and curriculum directors attend grade-level and department meetings. One school leader described how content in these meetings “helps drive what we need in the curriculum meetings.” Since teachers said they do not have regularly scheduled time to collaborate across different subject areas and different grade levels from their own, an area of growth for the district is to increase scheduled opportunities for collaboration that involve staff from different departments and grades.

Northbridge has an established mentoring program and onboarding processes for new staff, which is a strength of the district. The district’s mentoring program, as described in the curriculum and instruction and teacher focus groups, provides structured support for new teachers, particularly those who are new to the profession. New teachers receive a mentor and engage in bimonthly mentoring meetings. For teachers who are new to the district but not necessarily new to the profession, the principal may still assign a mentor if they believe that a teacher could benefit from additional support. In addition to the mentor-mentee pairing, new hires participate in a two-day summer orientation aimed at preparing them for the year ahead.

The *NPS Mentor Handbook (2024)* outlines the procedure for selecting mentors. To be eligible, mentors must have at least three years of teaching experience in the district and have completed the district’s mentor training. Once trained, principals receive a list of available mentors, and then the principals match them with new teachers based on grade level, department, or content area when possible. School leaders try to pair mentors and mentees in ways that support both professional growth and integration into the school culture. However, in some cases such as specialized positions (e.g., special education), the district may need to double up mentors or pull mentors from other buildings. Monitoring for the mentoring program occurs through logs that document meeting topics, and the director of curriculum and instruction reviews the logs to verify the

required 15 hours of mentoring per teacher. Teachers often go beyond this requirement, with some mentors providing additional support beyond the minimum hours.

Although the formal mentoring process is robust, some teachers noted that having mentors who are directly involved with the culture of the school would be more helpful for acclimating to a specific building. One teacher noted that being paired with a mentor from another school, although helpful for curriculum alignment, did not provide much insight into the culture of the specific school. However, teachers reported that informal support is available from other staff members, such as department chairs and grade-level leaders. According to the mentor handbook, the district mentor coordinator is responsible for conducting an annual evaluation of the program's effectiveness. Teachers shared positive experiences with the mentoring program, saying that they felt supported in the program and the mentors "got us what we needed." A teacher reported that the district is "constantly trying to cultivate new mentors," but some teachers said that there needs to be a more formal process for pairing new teachers with mentors.

Each department director trains their non-instructional staff. In one such case, the district's supervisor of administrative services agreed that they provide adequate training or professional development opportunities for their non-instructional staff (e.g., administrative support staff, food service employees, custodians, technology staff).

Recommendations

- *The district should review its current human resource office staffing levels and evaluate options for meeting the needs of district staff.*
- *The district should collaborate with union leadership to finalize and implement the employee handbook to support consistent and transparent human resources policies and practices across the district.*
- *The district should develop and implement a coherent strategy for staff recruitment and retention.*
- *The district should set expectations around incorporating greater levels of constructive feedback in evaluations for both teachers and administrators.*
- *The district should investigate the reasons behind incomplete administrator evaluations and reset expectations to achieve full completion.*
- *The district should maintain its focus on data and standards alignment in professional development while increasing teacher voice and prioritizing offerings that meet the needs of instructional staff.*
- *The district should review staff schedules to identify opportunities for collaborative planning across grades and subjects for all teachers, including ESL and special education teachers.*

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 MTSS that flexibly assesses and addresses each student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs.

Table 7 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in student support in Northbridge.

Table 7. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Student Support Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
<u>Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture</u>	- Northbridge collects and uses satisfaction surveys, student, and staff attendance data, and learning walk observations to monitor school and district culture. - Northbridge students have meaningful opportunities to provide feedback and demonstrate leadership.	- Consistently implementing behavioral expectations and consequences - Implementing supportive strategies to address chronic absenteeism, particularly for Low Income students, Hispanic or Latino students, English Learners, and their families
<u>Health and Well-Being</u>	The district offers multiple tiered mental and behavioral health services that support students' mental and emotional wellness.	Responding to student behaviors and connecting students with appropriate supports
<u>Family and Community Partnerships</u>	- The district creates inclusive opportunities for families to be an equal partner in their students' education and has clear and consistent multilingual communication systems in place. - The district has strong partnerships with various community organizations to provide services and enriching experiences. - The district identifies and connects all students with wraparound services.	
<u>Multitiered Systems of Support</u>	Northbridge has a defined MTSS system that proactively identifies students' behavioral and social emotional needs.	Aligning MTSS systems and implementing them across schools with fidelity

Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture

Northbridge has established clearly defined policies and plans designed to promote safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students. A review of district documents and feedback from district leadership revealed that the district has developed the following plans and shared them widely with students, families, and community members: multi-hazard evacuation plan, emergency response plan, bullying prevention plan, attendance policy, local wellness policy, and an allergy collection and verification protocol. The attendance policy is available on the district website and in the *Northbridge Student Handbook*. These plans outline procedures for responding to medical emergencies, as well as for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying or retaliation. The school committee approved the district's *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (2024-2025)* at the July 9, 2024, meeting and posted it on the district website. The plan emphasizes promoting a safe and inclusive school environment through skill-building, positive behavioral support, and collaboration with families and community partners.

According to district leaders, Northbridge collects and uses satisfaction surveys, student, and staff attendance data, and learning walk observations to regularly monitor school and district culture, which is a strength of the district. The superintendent and other district leaders reported that counselors, behavior specialists, SSTs, teachers, and administration work collaboratively to identify, monitor, and address student needs. Attendance meetings track data and identify reasons for chronic absenteeism. Infinite Campus logs referrals, records events related to students' experiences, and makes the data accessible to counselors and administration.

Discussions with the district's school counselor and student support staff revealed that Northbridge provides resources to address intensive behavioral support needs. These resources include individual and group counseling and intervention programs, such as the Pathways program that supports all students in general instruction, the BRIDGE program for students reintegrating back into school, and the CONNECT program, which is a therapeutic component built into the high school. At the elementary and middle levels, schools use programs such as Second Step to teach social-emotional skills and concepts in an engaging way. In addition, student support staff reported using restorative justice practices, and the superintendent stated that the district is working to implement strategies such as peer mediation to resolve conflicts and build a supportive school environment. Another key component of the district's efforts to support students is its collaboration with outside agencies to provide therapy and other support services. Student support staff also agreed that the district regularly evaluates students' social-emotional needs and supports educators in fostering social-emotional development.

Another way the district is fostering a safe and supportive environment is through its "Belonging and Connections" strategic initiative. This initiative focuses on "implementing a districtwide system to ensure every student has a positive relationship with at least one adult or [an] appropriate peer at school." To support this initiative, all schools within the district conduct a school climate survey. One school leader explained that the survey includes questions about whether students feel they have a trusted adult at school. According to feedback from students and their families, most students generally feel welcome, respected, and safe in their schools. For example, middle school students shared that counselors help resolve conflicts and settle disagreements on positive terms. One

middle school student reported that a teacher personally checked in with them about their safety and comfort in school.

However, mid-range CLASS scores for Teacher Sensitivity and feedback from student focus groups suggest that not all students consistently experience a safe and supportive school environment. Specifically, in focus groups, some high school students expressed concerns about inconsistent behavioral expectations and consequences across classrooms. These concerns about inconsistency appear in the Teacher Sensitivity ratings, which were in the middle range across school buildings. At this level, teachers may be aware of some students' needs but not always responsive to all students or their varying needs. Student focus group participants reported that some teachers appeared unaware of or ignored behavioral incidents, leading to a lack of equitable enforcement of discipline. Consistently implementing behavioral expectations is an area of growth for the district.

According to the attendance policy in the *District Student Handbook* (2024-2025), Northbridge has developed strategies to prevent and mitigate chronic absenteeism, yet parents and school staff reported challenges with the implementation of these strategies. The policy focuses on reporting absences and enacting consequences, without outlining specific supportive or nonpunitive engagement strategies. Parents expressed frustration with receiving notifications about absences without follow-up support and noted that district attendance reports are lengthy and not easily accessible. Students mentioned incentives such as the "attendance breakfast," though some viewed them as more of a "bribe" than a solution to the underlying causes of absenteeism. In addition, school staff mentioned using attendance contracts to improve student attendance, but their effectiveness remains unclear because it was difficult to assess their impact based on focus group responses. The need for comprehensive supports appears in the district's chronic absenteeism data. According to 2023-2024 data, 20.5 percent of students were chronically absent, which is 0.8 percentage points higher than the state average of 19.7 percent. Disparities in attendance are particularly pronounced among Low Income students, English Learners, and Hispanic or Latino students, with each of these groups having a chronic absenteeism rate of at least 30.9 percent. An area for growth for the district is implementing supportive strategies to address chronic absenteeism, particularly for Low Income students, Hispanic or Latino students, English Learners, and their families.

A notable strength of the district is the opportunity for students to demonstrate leadership and provide feedback. Student support staff highlighted several leadership programs available in Northbridge, including student government, the school committee, the National Honor Society, the Best Buddies program, school council, Link Crew, and the Nichols Leadership Academy. In partnership with Nichols College, the Nichols Leadership Academy allows a select group of students to work with college professors and students to develop their leadership skills. Another important leadership opportunity is the student representative on the school committee. According to school committee members, the student representative plays a vital role in ensuring that student voices are heard at meetings by providing updates, raising concerns, and offering thoughtful feedback—even when it challenges the views of committee members. An example of this leadership is the representative's initiative to conduct a student survey to gather peer perspectives. In addition, athletic teams engage with the school committee by sharing presentations at school committee meetings.

Middle and high school students also noted that they regularly provide feedback through surveys. High school students explained that even though some teachers implemented changes based on their feedback, surveys often occurred at the end of the school year, making the feedback less impactful. In addition, a school leader shared that the high school program of studies now includes woodworking after students requested it in a districtwide survey. Students also requested more time during the school day to catch up if they fall behind, which the district addressed with the RAMS block.

Health and Well-Being

Based on the *Northbridge Public Schools Program of Studies* document, the district offers health and physical education that aligns with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Frameworks. As shared by school leaders, the district offers health and physical education to all students at their schools; however, the offerings are inconsistent across grade levels. Northbridge High School offers students one semester of gym, as well as one semester of health per year in grades 9 and 10 that is combined with their physical education classes. Northbridge Middle School offers less than a semester of health and physical education to all students. Northbridge Elementary School offers a full year of physical education to all students.

The district prioritizes student health and well-being through a variety of support systems. School leaders and support staff make sure that students and their families have access to health resources by providing information and referrals to healthcare providers as needed. In addition, the district has a clear allergy verification protocol in place that is updated annually to promote student safety. The district also maintains a local wellness policy, as required by law, to foster an environment that supports students' health and ability to learn. This policy includes protocols that promote overall well-being. The director of pupil personnel services is responsible for confirming compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act, managing special education and EL needs, and coordinating health and wellness programs throughout the district.

In addition, school leaders stated that their district offers multiple tiered mental and behavioral health services that support students' mental and emotional wellness, which is a strength of the district. For example, the district employs adjustment counselors and behavioral technicians who provide individual and group counseling and engage in restorative practices. Northbridge also uses screeners such as the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 to monitor students' well-being. SSTs meet as needed to address student behavioral concerns, and the district uses multiple nonacademic interventions such as pull-outs, mental health breaks, the Pathways program, the CONNECT program, incentive plans, and Second Step to meet the specific needs of students. In addition, the district collaborates with community resources such as Advocates Incorporated to provide in-house therapy at their school buildings.

Teacher, student, and family focus group participants had mixed agreement with district and school leaders' implementation of these supports and consequences related to student behavior issues. For example, some teachers agreed that the district connects students to necessary supports, stating, "I had really tough classes last year, and the Pathways and CONNECT [programs] were so helpful." Other teachers reported that administration turnover led to inconsistencies in the application of behavioral consequences. One teacher stated, "I don't know what the consequences

are supposed to be for the behaviors that are happening.” In addition to staff perceptions, some family focus group participants described specific incidents in which their students did not receive appropriate behavioral support. These focus group participants reported an overall sentiment that “[the administration] team don’t seem to understand what could set a kiddo off, what heightens anxiety, what decreases anxiety” and that “even if those things are written in the behavior support plan and the IEP, I’m not finding anyone that cares to look.” Appropriately responding to student behaviors and connecting students to related supports is an area of growth for the district.

Family and Community Partnerships

District and school staff agreed that the district creates inclusive opportunities for families to be equal partners in their students’ education and has clear and consistent multilingual communication systems in place, which is a strength of the district. District leaders reported using several strategies to engage parents, including open houses; monthly principal meetings; family fun nights; parent-teacher conferences; and individual teacher updates via email, telephone, weekly RAMS reports, and ClassDojo. According to district leaders, Northbridge Elementary School uses ClassDojo to communicate with families in English and other languages. In focus groups, parents shared that the district’s communication channels make them feel aware of what is happening in the school community, and the use of apps for engagement with teachers and administrators is helpful for getting relevant information. In addition, Northbridge has family liaisons in their buildings that connect families with the district, schools, and additional community resources. Parents reported that the family liaisons are “great at problem solving,” and the volunteer opportunity information shared by the family liaisons is helpful. Teachers and student support staff reported that the district and its schools also provide guidance to staff on family communication. This guidance positions all families as equal partners in their students’ education through multilingual language and policies. ClassDojo, used at the elementary level, automatically translates messages from teachers into families’ home language. Furthermore, the district-provided guidance establishes expectations for how school and district staff will maintain reciprocal communication with all families.

District staff and school leaders reported that the district has strong relationships with various organizations in the community to provide services and enriching experiences to students and families during and outside the school day, which is a strength of the district. These include partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce’s Blackstone Valley Ed Hub, which allows students to take classes in other subjects such as manufacturing and robotics; Quinsigamond Community College, which offers students an opportunity to take college courses; Project 351, in which the community selects one student to “unite, act, and lead” for a year of service, empowering leadership training and teamwork with a statewide network of friends; Advocates, who provide walk-in services for in-moment referrals and provides transportation to families; and Beginning Bridges, local police officers who read books to kindergarten students and their families. In addition, the district partners with local dental care providers to offer services in schools.

Moreover, according to the superintendent and feedback from students, the district identifies and connects all students with wraparound services, which is a strength of the district. Northbridge family liaisons, as described on the district webpage, host workshops and events to support families in supporting their children and offer resources within the school and the community to help meet both staff and family needs. Student support focus group comments revealed that Northbridge Middle

School offers a Community Closet at which students and their families can receive new and gently used clothing, school supplies, and other daily essentials at no cost. Moreover, the elementary school and the high school offer a food pantry so that students and their families can receive nonperishable food items year-round. Guidance counselors and building-based SSTs also play a significant role in identifying and referring students to necessary services. In focus groups, middle and high school students reported that when they or their friends are experiencing difficulties, they feel comfortable reaching out to guidance counselors for support. One high school student explained how they “think [students] have a lot of staff that are willing to listen to [their] problems.” The superintendent and various school principals also explained that their district proactively identifies the needs of students and families through surveys and group meetings with students. The feedback was used to develop the district's strategic plan.

According to school student services leads, Northbridge has processes to identify and establish community partnerships. These processes include collaborating with the organization Advocates to connect students to local community resources and provide school-based counseling. The district also collaborates with the Chamber of Commerce to run the Blackstone Valley Ed Hub, which helps find internships for students within the community and provides work-based learning. Community members offer support by donating supplies, helping with fundraisers, and volunteering in the classroom. Additionally, school principals leverage their connections to provide students with work-study opportunities.

Multitiered Systems of Support

Northbridge has a defined MTSS system that proactively identifies students' behavioral and social emotional needs, which is a strength of the district. The district developed an SST manual, which outlines MTSS for academic (see Curriculum and Instruction) and nonacademic interventions, ensuring that appropriate progress monitoring procedures are in place across all school levels. According to district leaders, this framework supports students at varying levels of need, ranging from universal to intensive interventions. The SST regularly evaluates and adjusts interventions as needed for all grade levels. As described by school principals, the district's tiered approach to interventions is implemented across all grade levels for ELA and mathematics (see Equitable Practices and Access).

At the elementary level, nonacademic support occurs through programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Character Strong, and the Second Step program, which focus on social-emotional learning and character development. At the middle school, the district supports students' nonacademic needs through counseling groups, adjustment counselors, PBIS, and the Second Step program. At the high school level, additional nonacademic support is available through small-group settings, access to a school psychologist, behavior technicians, and special education teachers. In addition, the district offers more individualized support through programs such as CONNECT and BRIDGE, which provide personalized services and family support.

Moreover, the district provides guidance for school leaders on how to implement MTSS through the *Northbridge Public Schools Student Support Team Best Practices Manual*. This manual defines the process for providing student support, including the roles of SST members, referral procedures, and the steps for selecting and implementing interventions. It also includes tools such as intervention planning forms and a flowchart to help track and monitor the effectiveness of services. In addition, the

middle school uses the *MTSS and SST Reflection Document* to support the identification, placement, and monitoring of students in appropriate interventions.

According to the director of curriculum and instruction, the district's MTSS is designed to address both academic and social-emotional needs. The district regularly monitors the effectiveness of this system through data meetings scheduled after administering benchmark assessments. District leaders emphasized that they consistently review these data and conduct learning walks so that they can place students in appropriate interventions. At the district level, leaders highlighted several academic interventions available to support students who are struggling, including full inclusion classrooms, pull-out supports, push-in supports, coteaching classrooms, intervention blocks, and Orton-Gillingham instruction. These interventions vary by grade level and school. For Students with Disabilities and English Learners, district leaders noted that additional accommodations are provided to students, such as scribing, coteaching, and hour-long pull-out sessions four times per week. Teachers affirmed this, adding that the district also started providing bilingual speech-language pathologists at the elementary school level.

Although the district has a clear and structured approach to MTSS, challenges remain in maintaining consistency across schools. District leaders have acknowledged that ensuring fidelity in the implementation of MTSS remains an area of growth, as evidenced by the superintendent who said, "the MTSS process is not being done with fidelity" and cited staff turnover as a key factor. Other school staff echoed this sentiment, saying that the implementation of MTSS is inconsistent across schools. For instance, one elementary school teacher explained that providing Tier 2 and Tier 3 support for students is challenging due to the limited availability of support staff. Additionally, a middle school teacher noted that although teachers are encouraged to use the MTSS process, the district's communication of selected interventions to teachers is lacking. Aligning the MTSS systems and implementing them across schools with fidelity is an area of growth for the district.

Recommendations

- *The district should work with school leaders to pinpoint the inconsistencies in student behavior management and consequences and provide additional support, where needed, to increase consistent implementation.*
- *The district should identify culturally responsive, family-friendly strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism and develop a plan for implementing these strategies district-wide.*
- *The district should support staff to consistently implement behavioral supports and consequences by providing clear guidance, and strengthening the use of individualized behavior plans to better meet student needs.*
- *The district should focus on implementing its MTSS as outlined in its guidance and work with school leaders to monitor and adjust practices.*

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 that align with applicable laws to improve all students' performance, opportunities, and outcomes. It also focuses on how the district collaborates with its partners to run daily operations, manage its assets, and develop long-term plans for sustainability.

Table 8 summarizes key strengths and areas for growth in financial and asset management in Northbridge.

Table 8. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas for Growth: Financial and Asset Management Standard

Indicator	Strengths	Areas for growth
<u>Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure</u>	■ The district has an experienced, fully staffed Business and Finance Office, which provides effective daily operations and annual planning. ■ The district has a robust system for preserving, categorizing, and destroying financial documents as needed. ■ The district and town have a strong collaborative relationship, facilitating smooth operations and joint initiatives.	
<u>Budgeting and Budget Process</u>	■ The budget process is well documented, with detailed presentations and schedules available on the district website. ■ The district applies for state and federal grants aligned with the district strategic plan and has systems in place to comply with grant terms. ■ The district regularly provides budget updates to the school committee and tracks and adjusts current year spending.	■ Engaging teachers and families so that they feel welcome to participate in the budget process ■ Ensuring the sustainability of grant-funded initiatives
<u>Operations</u>	■ The district has a clearly defined partnership with the municipality to maintain the school grounds and build new facilities.	■ Maintaining classroom cleanliness ■ Equitably distributing technology and maintaining equipment consistently
<u>Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning</u>	■ As part of the capital planning process, school and district leaders collect and share information about capital needs. ■ The district's capital planning is part of the town's capital plan and incorporates input from key stakeholders.	

Business Office Staffing and Infrastructure

The district has an experienced, fully staffed Business and Finance Office, which provides effective daily operations and annual planning. This staffing and their expertise is a strength of the district. District leaders expressed confidence in the office's ability to manage its primary functions, supported by key staff members, including the director of business and finance, who oversees the district's financial operations; the accounts payable clerk, who is responsible for purchasing and managing accounts payable; and the payroll specialist, who handles payroll execution. The director has their Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) designation from the state. In addition, the office includes a human resources specialist, who manages human resources functions as well as higher-level payroll and grants, and a part-time transportation coordinator. With leadership that has been with the district for more than 15 years, the office provides a strong foundation for successfully carrying out these operations.

The district website includes a link to the school committee's online policy manual that comprises written policies and procedures that outline school committee and district staff responsibilities (e.g., budget deadlines and schedules, fiscal accounting and reporting, purchasing). This manual ensures that staff are aware of expectations regarding how to comply with state and federal requirements, establish an internal system of checks and balances, and support continuity of operations if staffing disruptions were to arise.

The district uses the MUNIS system to monitor and control its financial resources and aligns with the Uniform Massachusetts Accounting System. A district leader shared that its chart of accounts conforms with DESE's and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's requirements while using the town's system. This system ensures that the district's financial practices comply with state and local guidelines.

Another strength of the district is its robust system for preserving, categorizing, and, when permissible, destroying financial documents. District staff described keeping data in the office for four years, and older records are archived in a storage room at the middle school, with retention periods of seven or 10 years as required by law. In addition, the district keeps both hard copies and electronic copies of procurement documents and grants, and an index of documents is stored in a network-based repository created by King Information Systems. This system organizes the documents by fiscal year and dates, allowing district staff to track paid invoices and manage the retention of documents as they reach their retention cycles.

According to district staff and town officials, the district and town have a strong collaborative relationship, facilitating smooth operations and joint initiatives—a strength of the district. Several examples illustrate this collaborative relationship. For instance, the district and town work closely on payroll and purchasing matters. A town staff member, who previously worked in the district's business office, partners with current district business office staff to improve the timeliness of some district procedures, including making vendor payments more efficient. Budget discussions, primarily between district leaders and the town manager, are also collaborative, with both parties working together despite competing priorities from other departments (e.g., fire, police). Each department advocates for additional funding, but the town manager balances these needs equitably. As another example of the positive relationship, a town official highlighted a successful collaboration when the

town included the district when applying for a grant to build a fiber network, upgrading communications across town buildings and the district's system. He noted, "We're not in silos; we have our own responsibilities, but we don't forget about each other."

Regarding the formal relationship between the district and the town, there is a written agreement on indirect costs (e.g., health insurance, liability insurance). In addition, district staff and town officials describe their working relationship as positive, with ongoing discussions about revenue expectations and resource allocation. For example, the town and district work together on budgeting decisions, considering both fixed costs and available revenue. However, the town's financial limitations influence the district's financial situation because the town is "maxed out" in terms of its levy capacity. Although the district is not in a dire financial position, there is a limit to the available resources, making it difficult for the district to expand beyond what the town's revenues can support. The budget process and the timeline for incorporating the school committee's budgeting process into the municipality's budgeting process are available on the district website and included in budget presentations.

Budgeting and Budget Process

According to DESE data, Northbridge exceeded the net school spending requirement by 1.1 percent in fiscal year 2023 and by 0.1 percent in 2024, but is projected to be below net school spending by 0.1% in fiscal year 2025, based on the fiscal year 2025 budget. Also, per pupil funding was \$18,761 in fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$1,910 from fiscal year 2022. This is much lower than the statewide fiscal year 2024 average per-pupil funding of \$23,113.

District leaders explained that the district has resources to address anticipated out-of-district special education placements and related transportation costs. A district leader explained as follows:

It will really depend on, year by year, how much comes from what source. We use circuit breaker reimbursement . . . [and] the 240 grant to cover some of the new tuition out of district placements. And then we also use our appropriation funds. So, it's really a mix of those three sources that will help cover those expenses.

Despite the district exceeding the net school spending requirement, district leaders and teachers reported that the district's budget just barely provides appropriate levels of funding for key instructional resources. Teachers expressed concerns about the future, with some highlighting the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified staff given compensation disparities with neighboring districts. The average teacher salary in Northbridge was \$79,042 in fiscal year 2023, which was lower than the fiscal year 2023 state average of \$89,576. Addressing staffing challenges and having competitive compensation relative to neighboring districts is a priority for the district.

A strength of the Northbridge budget process is its documentation, including detailed presentations and schedules available on the district website. District budget documents clearly identify funds associated with grants, student activities and organizations, fees, and revolving funds in their most recently passed budget. The district provides budget information and calendars on their website. For the fiscal year 2025 budget cycle, they have detailed presentations and schedules available on their website. These presentations lay out critical dates and milestones for the budget.

District leaders, school-based staff, and the school committee each described the budget process from their respective perspectives. District leaders explained that the budget process kicks off in October. Typically, the superintendent and director of business and finance will develop the timeline for the coming year, determining dates for meetings, budget topics, and when certain items will be presented or approved. The timeline is presented and approved at the November school committee meeting. School and district leaders begin to put together support for a budget request for the upcoming year in October and November, working with their staff to itemize their requests. School leaders corroborated this, explaining that they have opportunities to request positions and supplies and to solicit other budgetary adjustments. They give teachers and department chairs the opportunity to request curriculum and supplies for grade-level activities. The process involves teachers filling out a form with their requests and justification, which then goes to the department and administration for review. The fulfillment of their requests largely depends on the financial health of the district and town. Teachers noted that sometimes the process is not as user-friendly as they would like, but the option for teacher input is available.

The director of business and finance and the superintendent meet to review the requests from school leaders. They also meet with the director of curriculum and instruction and the director of pupil personnel services and have staffing discussions. These discussions and budget development take place in December, to be prepared by Christmas break. In January, the budget director consolidates all the binders into a document to see the big picture. To develop budgets, district leaders consider current class sizes, projected enrollments, how many students have IEPs, and current staffing. They also consider revenue projections, revolving accounts, grant funds, and projections on revenues throughout January. The town manager provides revenue figures in February, and district leaders have budget subcommittee meetings with the school committee in January and February. The superintendent presents her recommended budget at the end of February or early March. Then there will be a public hearing on the budget, and the school committee will vote, typically at the end of March or the beginning of April.

Throughout the process, district leaders and town officials maintain regular communication. A town official explained, “Usually what we do is we’ll have preliminary meetings at the staff level between myself and the superintendent.” In spring meetings with town officials, the district learns what local resources will be available to fund their schools. A town official explained that, after the school committee approves the budget, district leaders and town officials “prepare for a town meeting and decision making by the voters, and present [our] cases.” The town meeting typically takes place at the beginning of May. School committee members shared that they view their role in the process “as supporting the superintendent and her administration and talking to the town’s money holders.” They also emphasized their commitment to considering student voices when making funding decisions.

District leaders and school committee members agree that the budget review and approval process is timely and culminates in an easily accessible, publicly available budget presentation. However, members of the teachers’ union stated that the budget development process does not adequately incorporate teachers’ input. Families who received notification about the budget process expressed feeling unwelcome to ask questions or participate. A parent who attended a budget meeting reported that only a few parents were present at the meeting. When asked about their role in the budget process, one parent shared as follows:

There is no area for like “hey, parents, what do you think we need?” . . . And anytime someone does question something, at least anytime I’ve questioned a line item in the budget, . . . I’ve gotten—I’m not going to say aggressive, but like less than kind responses, like “why are you looking into this?” Like it’s not my business. So, it’s not a team community kind of a thing.

Engaging teachers and families so that they feel welcome to participate in the budget process is an area for growth.

Budget documents indicate that the district applies for state and federal grants aligned with the district's strategic plan, and rigorous systems are in place to make sure that the district follows all grant terms and requirements in a timely manner, which is a strength of the district. District leaders further explained how the district blends restricted and unrestricted funds to maximize benefits to students. Although the district applies for and receives grant funding, an area of growth for the district is ensuring the sustainability of grant-funded initiatives. District leaders described the challenges, explaining as follows:

It’s hard to necessarily say how we build on sustainability, but we’re constantly evaluating our priorities and our needs and looking at what is the biggest need. That is what we’re going to fund, and we’re going to have to try to find something that . . . may have the least impact on our students if we didn’t have it to maintain this new need that came about with grant funding that we really still need for our students even though it’s not here.

The district has a three-year strategic plan, which includes budget considerations, but annual financial limitations make long-term planning difficult. At the time of the onsite visit in late 2024, negotiations were expected to begin soon with the teachers' union, as the contract was up for renewal in 2025. Although both district and town leaders acknowledge the need for fair compensation, the challenge lies in the limited financial resources available. A district leader explained,

It’s hard to have long-term, really long-term goals beyond three years. I worry about even three years because. . . we’re [barely] above net school spending so I can’t do anything. It’s heartbreaking actually to even think about long-term goals because there’s so many things I would love to do, and my team would love to do and without that you can’t do it. Not at the moment.

A teacher association member echoed what many in the district have said, “I think that we do the best in this district that we can with the little that we’re given.”

A district strength highlighted in school committee meeting minutes is that the district regularly provides budget updates to the school committee and works with budget managers to track and adjust current-year spending. School committee members described their interactions with district leaders as very helpful, stating that district leaders were able to “break down complex financial information in a way that anyone can understand.” The updates include line items, information on moving money from one place to another (and when), and how much money is in the budget for unfilled positions. As required, the district hires an independent financial auditing service each year. The fiscal year 2023 audit, the most recent audit available, indicates that the district complies with all requirements.

Operations

Enrollment information is available on the district website and, once enrolled, families have access to an Infinite Campus portal through which families can access instant, online, timely, and secure student information about their student's work in Northbridge and about issues that may affect them and their family.

According to town leaders, the district has a clearly defined partnership with the municipality to maintain the school grounds and build new facilities, which is a district strength. The elementary school has new ball fields that the town mows, plows, and fertilizes. Occasionally, the district requests extra help from the municipality.

Conversely, challenges exist in maintaining the cleanliness of some school buildings, particularly with a shortage of custodial staff. A teacher shared her frustration, noting that the shortage of custodial staff directly impacts the upkeep of the schools:

Even the custodial staff being light affects teachers and affects curriculum because. . . we've all brought in our own vacuum. We buy our own Swiffers. We are washing the floor.

This lack of custodial support affects classroom cleanliness and maintenance. In addition, neither school nor district leaders mentioned regularly reviewing the preventive maintenance plan or having a formal process in place for requesting and responding to maintenance services. Maintaining clean classrooms is an area of growth for the district.

Northbridge complies with state requirements for transportation and provides multilingual registration options for transportation services. Information about transportation services is available on the district website. Parents can register online in English, Arabic, Portuguese, and Spanish. The district currently has a contract with Vendetti Bus Company, but the contract is up for renewal in 2025, and at the time of the onsite, a new contract was out for bid.

The district website provides information about food services, including payment options and menus for all three schools. Aramark is the current provider, offering daily meal options along with a rotating schedule. A choice of fruit and/or vegetables is available at every meal. A high school student reported having more food options than in the past, which the students appreciate. However, another student shared concerns about finding mold in the food, and a third mentioned flies being an issue a few years ago. According to the website, all students are eligible to receive a complete breakfast and lunch each day at no cost for the entire school year. The meals are provided per the menu on the district website by the Food Services Department, but the free options exclude individual a la carte items, additional meals, or snacks and drinks that are available for purchase.

The district provides its students and staff with the hardware, software, and related licenses and support for everyday learning and daily operations, according to the district website. Teachers generally agreed with this categorization of what is provided, but felt that some students who receive special education services could benefit from assistive technology. Other middle school teachers said that they would like to have GoGuardian software so that they can monitor their students' work on their Chromebooks. Also, an elementary school teacher said that the district was good at providing the technology (e.g., Chromebooks) but, historically, has not maintained the technology

tools they provided. For example, a teacher cited issues getting replacement light bulbs for their whiteboards and losing access to online curriculum components in the years after first implementation. Equitable distribution of technology and consistent maintenance is an area for growth.

District staff explained that the district has an established process for purchasing supplies and services that aligns with state laws and effectively manages those contracts with vendors. District staff and town officials added that, with its municipal partners, the district executes and manages contracts with its vendors and has established timelines to proactively track the end of contracts and provides sufficient time for renewal or re-bidding for core district services.

Managing Capital Assets and Capital Planning

A strength of the district is that, as part of the capital planning process (2025-2029), district and school leaders actively collect and share information about capital needs. Although district staff did not specifically discuss the system for tracking its inventory of capital assets and critical supplies, they indicated that an established system is in place for tracking the replacement or disposal of goods.

The district's capital planning is part of the town's capital plan and incorporates input from key stakeholders, another strength of the district. This plan describes future capital needs based on future enrollment projections and facility assessments. According to district leaders, the plan incorporates input from the technology director, the facilities director, and school leaders. The school leaders get information and requests from teachers and students. They also hear of parent and community concerns. After district leaders review and prioritize items within the plan, the district plan goes to the school committee for review and approval. It then goes to the town manager, who meets with the finance committee and the board of selectmen. Typically, if something is on the capital plan, it goes to a town meeting for approval. A town official provided more context:

We do a five-year capital plan. So, we'll look at what's needed this year, what's needed in the short term, and then what's needed long term, like a new school for example. And then every year we go through a process with available funds, or we target grants, or figure out how we can work together to solve the problem.

Recommendations

- *The district should expand opportunities for families and teachers to participate in the budget development process.*
- *When applying for grants, the district should consider opportunities for long-term sustainability of each initiative.*
- *The district should determine ways to hire for custodial staff, while also establishing processes for preventative maintenance and addressing work orders.*
- *The district should resolve any gaps in anticipated technology maintenance and address inequitable asset distribution, where feasible.*

Appendix A. Summary of Site Visit Activities

The AIR team completed the following activities as part of the district review activities in Northbridge. The team conducted 72 classroom observations during the week of December 9, 2024, and held interviews and focus groups between December 9 and 10, 2024. 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
- Northbridge 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

Northbridge Public Schools

Classroom Visits: Summary of Findings

Districtwide Instructional Observation Report

December 2024

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Introduction

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

Three observers visited Northbridge Public Schools during the week of December 10, 2024. Observers conducted 72 observations in a sample of classrooms across three schools. Observations were conducted in grades K-12 and focused primarily on literacy, English language arts, and mathematics instruction.

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

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

Table 1. CLASS K-3 Domains and Dimensions

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

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

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary and Secondary Domains and Dimensions

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

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

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

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

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

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

Positive Climate

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Positive Climate District Average*: 4.8

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	4.8
Grades K-5	0	0	5	7	4	7	7	30	5.1
Grades 6-8	0	0	5	5	10	0	0	20	4.3
Grades 9-12	0	0	2	8	6	3	3	22	4.9

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 3, the district average is computed as: $[(3 \times 12) + (4 \times 20) + (5 \times 20) + (6 \times 10) + (7 \times 10)] \div 72 \text{ observations} = 4.8$

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

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

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

Teacher Sensitivity

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Teacher Sensitivity District Average*: 5.6

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	5.6
Grades K-5	0	0	3	2	6	10	9	30	5.7
Grades 6-8	0	0	2	1	12	5	0	20	5.0
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	2	5	8	7	22	5.9

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 4, the district average is computed as: $[(3 \times 5) + (4 \times 5) + (5 \times 23) + (6 \times 23) + (7 \times 16)] \div 72 \text{ observations} = 5.6$

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

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

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

Regard for Student Perspectives

Emotional Support domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Regard for Student Perspectives District Average*: 3.2

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	3.2
Grades K-5	3	7	9	9	1	0	1	30	3.1
Grades 6-8	1	4	6	6	2	1	0	20	3.4
Grades 9-12	4	2	8	2	3	2	1	22	3.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 5, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 8] + [2 \times 13] + [3 \times 23] + [4 \times 17] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 3] + [7 \times 2]) \div 72 \text{ observations} = 3.2$

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 K–3

Classroom Organization domain, Grades 4–12

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

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

Negative Climate District Average*: 6.8

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	6.8
Grades K-5	0	0	0	0	2	2	26	30	6.8
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	20	6.7
Grades 9-12	0	0	0	0	0	3	19	22	6.9

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 6, the district average is computed as: $[(5 \times 3) + (6 \times 9) + (7 \times 60)] \div 72 \text{ observations} = 6.8$

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.

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

Behavior Management

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Behavior Management District Average*: 6.3

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	6.3
Grades K-5	0	0	1	2	1	3	23	30	6.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	1	1	5	2	11	20	6.1
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	1	2	2	16	22	6.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 7, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 3] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 8] + [6 \times 7] + [7 \times 50]) \div 72 \text{ observations} = 6.3$

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

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

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

Productivity

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–12

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

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

Productivity District Average*: 6.5

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	6.5
Grades K-5	0	0	0	2	0	4	24	30	6.7
Grades 6-8	0	0	0	0	6	2	12	20	6.3
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	1	2	3	15	22	6.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 8, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 1] + [4 \times 3] + [5 \times 8] + [6 \times 9] + [7 \times 51]) \div 72 \text{ observations} = 6.5$

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

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

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

Instructional Learning Formats

Classroom Organization domain, Grades K–3

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4–12

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

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

Instructional Learning Formats District Average*: 4.9

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	4.9
Grades K-5	0	0	4	6	13	4	3	30	4.9
Grades 6-8	0	0	2	4	9	4	1	20	4.9
Grades 9-12	0	0	4	3	8	3	4	22	5.0

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 9, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 10] + [4 \times 13] + [5 \times 30] + [6 \times 11] + [7 \times 8]) \div 72 \text{ observations} = 4.9$

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

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

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

Concept Development

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3

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

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

Concept Development District Average*: 2.7

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	19	2.7
Grades K-3**	3	5	6	4	1	0	0	19	2.7

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 10, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 3] + [2 \times 5] + [3 \times 6] + [4 \times 4] + [5 \times 1]) \div 19 \text{ observations} = 2.7$

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

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

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

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

Content Understanding

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

Content Understanding District Average*: 4.4

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	53	4.4
Grades 4-5**	0	1	1	6	0	3	0	11	4.3
Grades 6-8	1	4	4	4	4	3	0	20	3.8
Grades 9-12	0	1	1	2	10	6	2	22	5.1

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 11, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 1] + [2 \times 6] + [3 \times 6] + [4 \times 12] + [5 \times 14] + [6 \times 12] + [7 \times 2]) \div 53 \text{ observations} = 4.4$

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

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

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

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

Analysis and Inquiry

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

Analysis and Inquiry District Average*: 3.0

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	53	3.0
Grades 4-5**	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	11	2.4
Grades 6-8	7	3	5	2	2	1	0	20	2.6
Grades 9-12	5	3	2	4	4	1	3	22	3.6

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 12, the district average is computed as: $[(1 \times 16) + (2 \times 9) + (3 \times 8) + (4 \times 8) + (5 \times 7) + (6 \times 2) + (7 \times 3)] \div 53 \text{ observations} = 3.0$

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

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

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

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

Quality of Feedback

Instructional Support domain, Grades K – 12

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

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

Quality of Feedback District Average*: 3.3

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	72	3.3
Grades K-5	3	7	9	4	5	1	1	30	3.3
Grades 6-8	0	5	8	3	3	1	0	20	3.4
Grades 9-12	5	4	3	2	4	4	0	22	3.4

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 13, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 8] + [2 \times 16] + [3 \times 20] + [4 \times 9] + [5 \times 12] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 1]) \div 72 \text{ observations} = 3.3$

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

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

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

Language Modeling

Instructional Support domain, Grades K–3

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

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

Language Modeling District Average*: 2.5

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	19	2.5
Grades K-3**	4	5	7	2	1	0	0	19	2.5

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 14, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 4] + [2 \times 5] + [3 \times 7] + [4 \times 2] + [5 \times 1]) \div 19 \text{ observations} = 2.5$

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

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

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

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

Instructional Dialogue

Instructional Support domain, Grades 4 – 12

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

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

Instructional Dialogue District Average*: 3.2

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	53	3.2
Grades 4-5**	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	11	4.1
Grades 6-8	3	4	4	5	1	3	0	20	3.3
Grades 9-12	7	4	4	3	2	2	0	22	2.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 15, the district average is computed as: $([1 \times 11] + [2 \times 10] + [3 \times 9] + [4 \times 11] + [5 \times 4] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 2]) \div 53 \text{ observations} = 3.2$

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

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

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

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

Student Engagement

Student Engagement domain, Grades 4–12

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

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

Student Engagement District Average*: 5.2

Grade Band	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range	n	Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	53	5.2
Grades 4-5**	0	1	1	0	2	4	3	11	5.5
Grades 6-8	0	0	5	6	6	2	1	20	4.4
Grades 9-12	0	0	1	3	2	9	7	22	5.8

*The district average is an average of the observation scores. In Table 16, the district average is computed as: $([2 \times 1] + [3 \times 7] + [4 \times 9] + [5 \times 10] + [6 \times 15] + [7 \times 11]) \div 53 \text{ observations} = 5.2$

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

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

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

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

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades K–5

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range		Average Scores*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n	
Emotional Support Domain	3	7	17	18	13	19	43	120	5.2
Positive Climate	0	0	5	7	4	7	7	30	5.1
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	2	2	26	30	6.8
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	3	2	6	10	9	30	5.7
Regard for Student Perspectives	3	7	9	9	1	0	1	30	3.1
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	5	10	14	11	50	90	6.0
Behavior Management	0	0	1	2	1	3	23	30	6.5
Productivity	0	0	0	2	0	4	24	30	6.7
Instructional Learning Formats***	0	0	4	6	13	4	3	30	4.9
Instructional Support Domain	15	23	25	21	9	5	3	101	3.1
Concept Development (K-3 only)	3	5	6	4	1	0	0	19	2.7
Content Understanding (UE only)	0	1	1	6	0	3	0	11	4.3
Analysis and Inquiry (UE only)	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	11	2.4
Quality of Feedback	3	7	9	4	5	1	1	30	3.3
Language Modeling (K-3 only)	4	5	7	2	1	0	0	19	2.5
Instructional Dialogue (UE only)	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	11	4.1
Student Engagement (UE only)	0	1	1	0	2	4	3	11	5.5

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 5] + [4 \times 7] + [5 \times 4] + [6 \times 7] + [7 \times 7]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 5.1$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([5 \times 2] + [6 \times 2] + [7 \times 26]) \div 30 \text{ observations} = 6.8$. In addition, Negative Climate appears in the Classroom Organization Domain for the Upper Elementary Manual.

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

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 6–8

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n	Average Scores*
Emotional Support Domain	1	4	13	12	24	6	0	60	4.2
Positive Climate	0	0	5	5	10	0	0	20	4.3
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	2	1	12	5	0	20	5.0
Regard for Student Perspectives	1	4	6	6	2	1	0	20	3.4
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	1	1	12	8	38	60	6.4
Behavior Management	0	0	1	1	5	2	11	20	6.1
Productivity	0	0	0	0	6	2	12	20	6.3
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	20	6.7
Instructional Support Domain	11	16	23	18	19	12	1	100	3.6
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	2	4	9	4	1	20	4.9
Content Understanding	1	4	4	4	4	3	0	20	3.8
Analysis and Inquiry	7	3	5	2	2	1	0	20	2.6
Quality of Feedback	0	5	8	3	3	1	0	20	3.4
Instructional Dialogue	3	4	4	5	1	3	0	20	3.3
Student Engagement	0	0	5	6	6	2	1	20	4.4

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 5] + [4 \times 5] + [5 \times 10]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 4.3$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([5 \times 1] + [6 \times 4] + [7 \times 15]) \div 20 \text{ observations} = 6.7$

Summary of Average Ratings: Grades 9–12

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

	Low Range	Low Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	Middle Range	High Range	High Range		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n	Average Scores*
Emotional Support Domain	4	2	10	12	14	13	11	66	4.7
Positive Climate	0	0	2	8	6	3	3	22	4.9
Teacher Sensitivity	0	0	0	2	5	8	7	22	5.9
Regard for Student Perspectives	4	2	8	2	3	2	1	22	3.4
Classroom Organization Domain	0	0	2	2	4	8	50	66	6.5
Behavior Management	0	0	1	1	2	2	16	22	6.4
Productivity	0	0	1	1	2	3	15	22	6.4
Negative Climate**	0	0	0	0	0	3	19	22	6.9
Instructional Support Domain	17	12	14	14	28	16	9	110	4.0
Instructional Learning Formats	0	0	4	3	8	3	4	22	5.0
Content Understanding	0	1	1	2	10	6	2	22	5.1
Analysis and Inquiry	5	3	2	4	4	1	3	22	3.6
Quality of Feedback	5	4	3	2	4	4	0	22	3.4
Instructional Dialogue	7	4	4	3	2	2	0	22	2.8
Student Engagement	0	0	1	3	2	9	7	22	5.8

*The district average is an average of the scores. For example, for Positive Climate, the district average is computed as: $([3 \times 2] + [4 \times 8] + [5 \times 6] + [6 \times 3] + [7 \times 3]) \div 22 \text{ observations} = 4.9$

**Negative Climate is rated on an inverse scale. An original score of 1 is given a value of 7. The scoring in the table reflects the normalized adjustment: $([6 \times 3] + [7 \times 19]) \div 22 \text{ observations} = 6.9$

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

Table C1. Resources to Support Leadership and Governance

Resource	Description
Coherence Guidebook ^a	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.
New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP)	In partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP) is a three-year professional development program for superintendents in their first 3 years of their position in a Massachusetts school district. The curriculum is aligned to DESE's Educational Vision and supports new superintendents with developing the skills and competencies to be effective leaders of their school districts.
Principal Induction and Mentoring Handbook	A series of modules designed to support novice principals and their mentors in the development of antiracist leadership competencies aligned to the Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership.
Planning for Success In Massachusetts	Planning for Success (PFS) is an inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support.

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

Table C2. Resources to Support Curriculum and Instruction

Resource	Description
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 curricula that are 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 curricula. 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.
Mass Literacy Guide	Mass Literacy is a statewide effort to empower educators with the evidence-based practices for literacy that all students need. Evidence-based instruction, provided within schools and

Resource	Description
	classrooms that are culturally and linguistically sustaining, will put our youngest students on a path toward literacy for life.
Foundations for Inclusive Practices	This Guidebook includes tools for districts, schools, and educators that are aligned to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework and promote evidence-based best practices for inclusion.
Guidebook of Culturally Diverse Artists and Artworks	The purpose of this resource is to promote culturally responsive teaching in the arts through the study of culturally diverse artists and their artworks. This guidebook highlights art made by people with racial identities that historically have been and continue to be marginalized.
Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success	Framework for English learner education in MA, with embedded Quick Reference Guides (QRGs) and other resources to support implementation.
Massachusetts Curricular Resources ■ Appleseeds ■ Investigating History ■ OpenSciEd	Free, open-source curricular resources aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines	Clear and practical guidelines for early screening, instruction, and intervention for students with reading difficulties and neurological learning disabilities, including dyslexia.
Next Generation ESL Toolkit	The ESL Toolkit provides a common entry point for educators to learn about Next Generation ESL (NGESL) instruction in Massachusetts.
Synthesized ILT Framework	District and school teams can use this resource to reflect and identify specific actions they could take to establish or improve their instructional leadership teams (ILTs).

Table C3. Resources to Support Assessment

Resource	Description
Assessment Literacy Continuum	Tool to help teachers identify what aspects of assessment literacy they should focus on for their own goal setting.
Curriculum-Embedded Performance Assessments	Pending funding, this program will provide resources and professional learning for classroom-based, curriculum-embedded performance tasks in K-8 science with implementation and instructional supports aligned to the Innovative Assessment (STE).
District Data Team Toolkit	A set of resources to help a district establish, grow, and maintain a culture of inquiry and data use through a district data team.
Early Literacy Screening	Guidance and support for schools and districts to select and use an approved early literacy universal screening assessment.
Student Assessment	Statewide assessments help parents, students, educators, and policymakers determine where districts, schools, and students are meeting expectations and where they need additional support.

Table C4. 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.
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.
Induction and Mentoring ■ Teacher Induction and Mentoring ■ Principal Induction and Mentoring ■ Induction and Mentoring Annual Report	Resources that highlight best practices and reinforce the recently updated guidelines and standards for induction and mentoring.
Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL)	Information on MTEL exams, MTEL alternatives, and licensure requirements for educators.
OPTIC	A professional development tool that supports Massachusetts educators to build a shared understanding of high-quality instruction and improve the feedback that teachers receive.
Professional Learning Partner Guide	A free, online, searchable list of vetted professional development providers who have expertise in specific sets of high-quality instructional materials. Schools and districts can use this guide to easily find PD providers to support the launch or implementation of high-quality instructional materials.
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	Observation tools to help district staff observe instruction.
Talent Guide	An online hub of resources, considerations, and updates for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and supporting educators and school staff, with a focus on equity.
WIDA Professional Development	WIDA professional development provides great information and strategies to support multilingual learners in Massachusetts public schools, and WIDA PDPs satisfy educator licensure renewal requirements. These DESE Sponsored courses are available at no cost to participants and are perfect for teams of teachers seeking impactful collaboration to support students’ access to rigorous course content.

Table C5. Resources to Support Student Support

Resource	Description
Dropout Prevention and Reengagement ■ Dropout Prevention and Reengagement (DPR) Resources ■ Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS)	DPR efforts are designed to support students at-risk of not graduating or reengage students who have left school with opportunities to gain the academic, personal/social, and work readiness skills necessary to graduate and lead productive lives. EWIS includes tools for districts to identify students who are at risk and help get them back on track.
Educational Stability Resources ■ Educational Stability for Highly Mobile Students ■ SLIFE Guidance and Toolkit ■ Resources for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Students	The linked resources provide guidance, technical assistance, professional learning opportunities, grants, and other supports to ensure that students experiencing homelessness, those in foster care, migrant and refugee students, those with limited or interrupted formal education, and students in military families have access to a consistent and high-quality public education.
Emergency Management Guidance (Federal and State)	Guidance and Technical Assistance for districts/schools related to emergency management planning and implementation.
Family Partnerships ■ DESE Family Portal ■ Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts	Resources for authentically engaging families in their child's education and centering families voices in school and district decision-making.
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.
■ School Wellness Initiative for Thriving Community Health (SWITCH)	SWITCH provides resources that support and advance wellness efforts for Massachusetts students, schools, and communities.
Social Emotional Learning: ■ SEL/APL Standards (Pk/K) ■ Playful Learning Institute, Preschool through 3rd Grade ■ Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development	These resources provide evidence-based and developmentally appropriate guidance for supporting social-emotional learning in schools.

Table C6. Resources to Support Financial and Asset Management

Resource	Description
DESE Spending Comparisons Website	A clearinghouse of school finance data reports and other resources available to district users and the public.
General Resources for Federal Grant Programs	General federal grants resources.
Office for Food and Nutrition Programs	Resources for school districts, childcare centers, family day care homes, adult day health programs, Summer Eats community organizations, USDA Foods storage and distribution vendors, food banks, and anti-hunger organizations across the Commonwealth.
Planning for Success (PfS)	An inclusive, hands-on planning process designed to build district and school capacity and coherence while also building community understanding and support.
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.
School Breakfast: Breakfast After the Bell Resources	The Breakfast After the Bell Toolkit Series is designed to help with the launch and implementation of alternative breakfast models.
School Meals Newsletter	Short articles summarizing current events, including changes in federal/state requirements, current grant opportunities, and notable dates.
Summer Eats Free Meals for Kids and Teens in MA	Summer Eats is a free-of-charge program that provides free meals to all kids and teens, ages 18 and under, at locations all across Massachusetts during the summer months.

Appendix D. Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditures

Table D1. Northbridge Public Schools: Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2024-2025

Group	District	Percentage of total	State	Percentage of total
All Students	1,838	100.0%	915,932	100.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.1%	2,272	0.2%
Asian	24	1.3%	68,608	7.5%
Black or African American	38	2.1%	93,245	10.2%
Hispanic or Latino	276	15.0%	236,839	25.9%
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	46	2.5%	42,303	4.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	800	0.1%
White	1,453	79.1%	471,865	51.5%

Note. As of October 1, 2024.

Table D2. Northbridge Public Schools: 2024-2025 Student Enrollment by High Needs Populations

Group	District			State		
	N	Percentage of High Needs	Percentage of District	N	Percentage of High Needs	Percentage of State
High Needs	911	100.0%	48.9%	517,093	100.0%	55.8%
English Learners	91	10.0%	5.0%	127,673	24.7%	13.9%
Low Income	680	74.6%	37.0%	385,161	74.5%	42.1%
Students with Disabilities	336	36.9%	18.0%	190,967	36.9%	20.6%

Note. As of October 1, 2024. District and state numbers and percentages for students with disabilities and high needs are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Total district enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 1,864; total state enrollment including students in out-of-district placement is 926,057.

Table D3. Northbridge Public Schools: Chronic Absence^a Rates by Student Group, 2022-2024

Group	N (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All Students	1,950	33.4	21.8	20.5	19.7
High Needs	1,036	42.3	31.2	29.1	27.2
English Learners	82	48.4	34.5	31.7	29.9
Low Income	828	44.6	34.8	31.9	30.3
Students with Disabilities	431	41.5	26.2	26.2	27.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	—	—	—	28.5
Asian	19	11.1	6.3	0.0	11.8
Black or African American	40	16.1	6.3	12.5	22.5
Hispanic or Latino	272	46.4	27.3	30.9	31.3
Multi-Race, Not Hispanic or Latino	45	42.0	31.3	15.6	20.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	24.3
White	1,573	31.9	21.1	19.3	14.4

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

Table D4. Northbridge Public Schools: Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending Fiscal Years, 2021-2023

	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022	Fiscal Year 2023
Expenditures			
From local appropriations for schools			
By school committee	\$24,121,203	\$24,629,874	\$25,266,208
By municipality	\$7,178,403	\$7,195,312	\$7,136,737
Total from local appropriations	\$31,299,606	\$31,825,186	\$32,402,945
From revolving funds and grants	\$4,463,626	\$5,214,459	\$5,637,764
Total expenditures	\$35,763,232	\$37,039,644	\$38,040,709
Chapter 70 aid to education program			
Chapter 70 state aid ^a	\$15,603,931	\$15,664,621	\$15,786,061
Required local contribution	\$12,499,433	\$12,899,827	\$13,630,647
Required net school spending ^b	\$28,103,364	\$28,564,448	\$29,416,708
Actual net school spending	\$29,486,105	\$29,515,069	\$29,739,638
Over/under required (\$)	\$1,382,741	\$950,621	\$322,930
Over/under required (%)	4.9%	3.3%	1.1%

Note. Expenditures from the School Finance Dashboard sourced from [Resource Allocation and District Action Reports \(RADAR\)](#) last updated April 2025. Chapter 70 aid to education from Chapter 70 District Profiles sourced from [Chapter 70 Program - School Finance](#) last updated August 8, 2024.

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

Table D5. Northbridge Public Schools: Expenditures Per In-District Pupil, Fiscal Years 2021-2023

Expenditure category	2021	2022	2023
Administration	\$478	\$509	\$527
Instructional leadership (district and school)	\$1,121	\$1,126	\$1,169
Teachers	\$6,531	\$6,540	\$6,600
Other teaching services	\$1,376	\$1,616	\$1,747
Professional development	\$75	\$94	\$116
Instructional materials, equipment, and technology	\$729	\$337	\$274
Guidance, counseling, and testing services	\$504	\$566	\$596
Pupil services	\$1,300	\$1,597	\$1,675
Operations and maintenance	\$1,310	\$1,273	\$1,418
Insurance, retirement, and other fixed costs	\$2,717	\$2,729	\$2,600
Total expenditures per in-district pupil	\$16,141	\$16,387	\$16,723

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

Appendix E. Northbridge Public Schools: Student Performance Data

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	824	32	30	32	39	48	47	46	40	20	23	23	21
African American/Black	18	—	50	39	24	—	30	39	46	—	20	22	31
Asian	7	—	—	—	62	—	—	—	29	—	—	—	10
Hispanic/Latino	97	27	29	30	20	47	41	40	44	26	30	30	36
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	13	34	50	46	46	52	38	46	37	14	13	8	17
Native American	1	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	32
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	21
White	688	33	30	31	47	48	48	47	40	19	22	22	13
High needs	434	19	19	18	22	51	45	46	45	30	36	36	33
Low income	336	20	22	20	21	52	46	46	45	28	32	34	34
ELs and former ELs	60	18	23	12	17	43	45	48	43	39	32	40	41
Students w/disabilities	188	6	4	7	11	40	36	35	40	54	60	57	50

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	128	57	60	60	57	30	33	30	31	13	7	9	12
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	42	—	—	—	40	—	—	—	18
Asian	1	—	—	—	78	—	—	—	16	—	—	—	5
Hispanic/Latino	13	36	65	46	36	36	18	38	38	27	18	15	26
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	61	—	—	—	30	—	—	—	9
Native American	—	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	14
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	58	—	—	—	34	—	—	—	8
White	112	56	57	62	65	32	38	29	28	12	5	9	7
High needs	56	33	42	43	37	39	45	38	41	27	13	20	23
Low income	48	41	46	46	38	38	46	35	40	21	9	19	23
ELs and former ELs	5	—	—	—	14	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	48
Students w/disabilities	23	8	15	13	21	36	55	48	45	56	30	39	34

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	824	32	35	37	41	52	48	46	42	16	17	18	18
African American/Black	18	—	60	44	22	—	30	33	49	—	10	22	30
Asian	7	—	—	—	71	—	—	—	23	—	—	—	6
Hispanic/Latino	98	14	22	24	20	61	57	47	48	25	22	29	32
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	13	37	50	69	47	49	42	31	37	14	8	0	16
Native American	1	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	27
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	41	—	—	—	20
White	687	34	36	38	49	51	47	46	40	15	17	16	11
High needs	433	19	22	22	23	54	48	49	48	26	29	29	28
Low income	335	20	24	23	21	56	48	47	49	24	27	30	30
ELs and former ELs	62	16	24	13	21	57	51	50	46	27	25	37	33
Students w/disabilities	187	6	7	10	13	45	45	42	43	48	49	48	44

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	129	51	47	46	48	35	46	43	39	13	7	12	13
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	21
Asian	1	—	—	—	79	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	4
Hispanic/Latino	14	30	29	29	25	50	53	57	50	20	18	14	25
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	51	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	10
Native American	—	—	—	—	33	—	—	—	54	—	—	—	13
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	52	—	—	—	39	—	—	—	10
White	112	52	50	47	58	34	44	41	35	14	6	12	7
High needs	56	27	25	30	27	43	63	48	51	31	12	21	23
Low income	48	35	28	35	27	41	63	46	50	24	9	19	23
ELs and former ELs	7	—	—	—	14	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	40
Students w/disabilities	21	0	5	10	14	46	79	43	51	54	16	48	35

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	269	44	32	41	42	40	49	43	38	16	18	17	20
African American/Black	7	—	—	—	21	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	33
Asian	2	—	—	—	64	—	—	—	26	—	—	—	9
Hispanic/Latino	27	41	25	22	21	33	47	52	43	26	28	26	36
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	5	45	—	—	49	45	—	—	34	9	—	—	17
Native American	—	—	—	—	26	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	32
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	43	—	—	—	34	—	—	—	23
White	228	44	33	41	51	42	49	43	36	14	18	16	12
High needs	128	28	23	26	24	47	46	48	44	25	31	26	32
Low income	105	29	25	29	22	46	49	46	44	25	26	26	34
ELs and former ELs	16	35	21	6	17	35	54	63	41	29	25	31	42
Students w/disabilities	44	10	11	9	15	43	37	45	38	47	52	45	46

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
All	122	46	34	39	49	44	61	52	40	11	5	9	11
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	28	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	19
Asian	1	—	—	—	77	—	—	—	19	—	—	—	5
Hispanic/Latino	12	—	25	25	26	—	75	58	52	—	0	17	22
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	37	—	—	—	10
Native American	—	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	10
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	47	—	—	—	45	—	—	—	8
White	107	46	37	39	58	44	57	52	36	10	7	8	6
High needs	51	27	17	25	28	50	71	57	52	23	12	18	20
Low income	43	29	17	30	28	53	78	49	51	18	6	21	20
ELs and former ELs	3	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	48	—	—	—	39
Students w/disabilities	22	10	6	9	18	52	69	59	52	38	25	32	31

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

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

Grade	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
3	146	37	39	39	42	55	43	42	40	8	18	19	18
4	141	27	29	29	37	52	60	50	45	22	11	21	19
5	112	42	41	41	38	49	41	53	46	8	17	6	16
6	125	30	22	22	40	43	42	50	35	28	36	28	25
7	143	30	29	24	36	51	48	45	42	18	23	31	22
8	157	29	23	34	43	42	49	38	34	29	27	27	24
3-8	824	32	30	32	39	48	47	46	40	20	23	23	21
10	128	57	60	60	57	30	33	30	31	13	7	9	12

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

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

Grade	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
3	146	42	41	45	44	47	42	36	35	11	17	18	20
4	140	33	49	41	46	49	43	44	38	18	8	16	16
5	113	25	32	42	40	65	54	48	46	10	13	10	14
6	126	29	24	21	40	54	55	56	43	17	21	24	17
7	142	32	30	25	37	52	45	51	44	17	25	24	19
8	157	33	36	44	38	46	46	42	42	21	17	14	19
3-8	824	32	35	37	41	52	48	46	42	16	17	18	18
10	129	51	47	46	48	35	46	43	39	13	7	12	13

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

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

Grade	# Included (2024)	% M/E 2022	% M/E 2023	% M/E 2024	% M/E 2024 State	% PME 2022	% PME 2023	% PME 2024	% PME 2024 State	% NM 2022	% NM 2023	% NM 2024	% NM 2024 State
5	113	49	37	45	45	40	47	44	36	11	16	11	20
8	156	40	28	37	39	40	52	42	41	19	21	21	20
5 and 8	269	44	32	41	42	40	49	43	38	16	18	17	20
10	122	46	34	39	49	44	61	52	40	11	5	9	11

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

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	645	45	41	48	50
African American/Black	8	—	—	—	49
Asian	6	—	—	—	57
Hispanic/Latino	68	42	46	51	48
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	12	56	49	—	51
Native American	1	—	—	—	48
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	51
White	550	45	40	47	50
High needs	332	44	39	45	48
Low income	263	44	40	45	47
ELs and former ELs	44	41	52	48	50
Students w/disabilities	131	38	36	43	45

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	117	44	51	64	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	48
Asian	1	—	—	—	55
Hispanic/Latino	11	—	—	—	47
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	50
Native American	—	—	—	—	51
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	49
White	103	45	49	62	51
High needs	47	44	48	65	47
Low income	39	49	50	67	47
ELs and former ELs	3	—	—	—	48
Students w/disabilities	19	—	—	—	44

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	646	52	49	47	50
African American/Black	8	—	—	—	49
Asian	6	—	—	—	58
Hispanic/Latino	69	49	47	41	48
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	12	56	54	—	50
Native American	1	—	—	—	48
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	52
White	550	53	49	47	50
High needs	333	52	46	44	48
Low income	263	52	47	43	47
ELs and former ELs	46	52	53	46	50
Students w/disabilities	132	45	42	39	46

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
All students	115	36	42	52	50
African American/Black	—	—	—	—	47
Asian	1	—	—	—	55
Hispanic/Latino	10	—	—	—	45
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	2	—	—	—	49
Native American	—	—	—	—	50
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	50
White	102	36	39	53	52
High needs	45	33	40	55	47
Low income	37	34	43	56	46
ELs and former ELs	3	—	—	—	46
Students w/disabilities	17	—	—	—	47

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

Grade	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
3	—	—	—	—	—
4	133	44	41	43	50
5	107	60	61	64	50
6	117	35	28	35	50
7	138	52	41	48	50
8	150	36	38	51	50
3-8	645	45	41	48	50
10	117	44	51	64	50

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

Grade	# Included (2024)	2022	2023	2024	State (2024)
3	—	—	—	—	—
4	134	52	43	42	50
5	107	49	59	41	50
6	118	43	34	32	50
7	138	58	52	46	50
8	149	58	56	67	50
3-8	646	52	49	47	50
10	115	36	42	52	50

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

Group	# Included (2023)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	State 2023 (%)
All	140	84.6	86.3	88.6	89.2
African American/Black	2		—	—	85.6
Asian	—		—	—	95.2
Hispanic/Latino	16	81.8	75.0	68.8	78.9
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	4		87.5	—	89.3
Native American	—	—	—	—	82.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—		—	—	89.9
White	118	84.8	86.5	90.7	93.0
High needs	72	71.0	75.3	80.6	82.8
Low income	66	71.2	75.4	80.3	82.2
ELs	5	83.3	—	—	67.3
Students w/disabilities	18	60.6	50.0	77.8	76.4

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

Group	# Included (2022)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	State 2022 (%)
All	153	92.6	86.2	87.6	91.9
African American/Black	3	—		—	90.1
Asian	4	—		—	96.9
Hispanic/Latino	12	100.0	81.8	75.0	84.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	8	—		87.5	90.8
Native American	—	—	—	—	87.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—		—	81.3
White	126	91.6	86.6	88.1	94.4
High needs	73	83.9	73.9	78.1	86.8
Low income	69	81.0	74.6	78.3	86.3
ELs	4	—	83.3	—	78.0
Students w/disabilities	22	69.6	63.6	54.5	81.8

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

Group	# Included (2023)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	State 2023 (%)
All	513	2.5	3.7	2.5	2.1
African American/Black	10	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.8
Asian	5	0.0	0.0	—	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	62	2.6	4.0	4.8	4.4
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	13	0.0	4.0	15.4	1.9
Native American	—	—	—	—	4.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	3.9
White	423	2.4	3.8	1.9	1.1
High needs	216	5.4	9.2	5.6	3.5
Low income	183	—	8.6	6.6	3.8
ELs	10	0.0	25.0	10.0	8.0
Students w/disabilities	70	11.8	11.4	2.9	3.0

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	1,933	2.5	0.0	0.1	1.4
African American/Black	39	—	—	—	2.1
Asian	19	—	—	—	0.3
Hispanic/Latino	275	3.4	0.0	0.0	1.9
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	43	5.0	—	—	1.6
Native American	1	—	—	—	1.8
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	—	—	—	1.9
White	1,556	2.2	0.1	0.1	1.1
High needs	1,029	2.4	0.1	0.1	1.9
Low income	816	2.6	0.1	0.1	2.1
ELs	87	—	—	—	1.4
Students w/disabilities	430	2.8	0.0	0.2	2.4

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	1,933	3.1	2.6	3.5	2.4
African American/Black	39	—	—	—	4.6
Asian	19	—	—	—	0.6
Hispanic/Latino	275	4.9	2.5	4.7	3.8
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	43	6.0	—	—	2.6
Native American	1	—	—	—	3.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	—	—	—	2.5
White	1,556	2.7	2.4	3.3	1.5
High needs	1,029	4.1	3.8	5.2	3.6
Low income	816	4.6	4.2	5.6	4.0
ELs	87	—	—	—	2.6
Students w/disabilities	430	5.2	4.6	7.7	4.5

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

Group	# Included (2024)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	State 2024 (%)
All	213	63.5	31.7	62.9	67.2
African American/Black	8	—	—	62.5	58.2
Asian	4	—	—	—	86.4
Hispanic/Latino	31	27.3	20.0	45.2	53.7
Multi-Race, non-Hispanic/Latino	6	45.5	—	33.3	68.4
Native American	—	—	—	—	57.1
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	59.8
White	164	66.8	33.3	67.1	71.9
High needs	84	51.9	19.8	42.9	52.0
Low income	68	54.8	22.7	48.5	53.1
ELs	5	—	—	—	31.8
Students w/disabilities	30	23.1	7.1	10.0	38.5

Table E22. Accountability Results, 2024

School	Cumulative progress toward improvement targets (%)	Percentile	Overall classification	Reason for classification
District	47%	—	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Moderate progress toward targets
Northbridge Elementary School	60%	48	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Substantial progress toward targets
Northbridge Middle School	49%	23	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Moderate progress toward targets
Northbridge High School	34%	29	Not requiring assistance or intervention	Moderate progress toward targets