

GROTON-DUNSTABLE
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Needs Assessment

FALL 2015

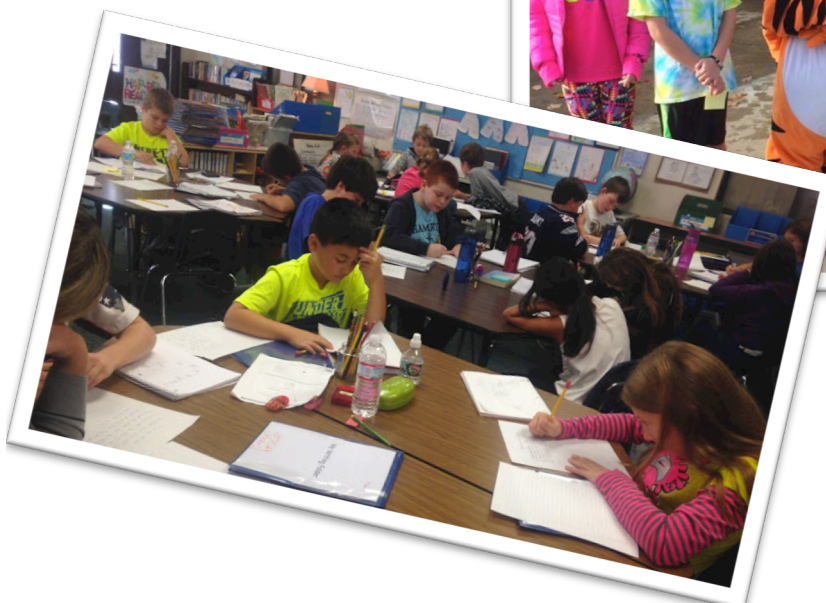


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Introduction

At Groton-Dunstable, we have wonderful students and a strong staff. Our many successes would not be possible without ongoing support from our entire community. Every organization has areas that can be improved upon and our district is no exception. Five key findings emerged as needs to be addressed:

1. **We need to reverse declining student performance in core areas** *caused by the loss of essential staffing and resources.*
2. **We need to restore and improve programs to meet the needs of students** *in the areas of the arts, library science, physical/behavioral health, technology and engineering, and foreign language.*
3. **We need to provide comprehensive social and emotional support to our students.**
4. **We need to improve performance of students with disabilities while meeting the needs of all learners.**
5. **We need to provide essential support services** *including kindergarten assistants, technology support staff, nursing staff, custodial and maintenance staff, business office staff, and administrative assistants.*

The Needs Assessment does not provide information about associated costs. Budget recommendations will follow. Major technology and capital needs are not addressed in the Needs Assessment. Technology and capital plans will be completed by Spring 2016.

Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

District Data Analysis

Although Groton-Dunstable ranks above the state average in many performance areas, we have experienced significant declines when examining historical data. In 2010 and 2011, our district was designated as a Level 1 district (the highest designation in the state). The district's current accountability Level has been lowered to a Level 2 district and has been so since 2012. The 2014 state accountability report (the last to include comparable reporting from one year to the next with the MCAS in grades 3-8 and 10) shows an overall decline in district performance over the past 3 years. The cumulative PPI score combines information about narrowing proficiency gaps (in English, math, and science), growth (in English and math), graduation and dropout rates over the most recent four-year period into a single number. Our PPI in 2012 was 95. It then fell to 92 in 2013, and fell again in 2014 to 91.

These declines are most evident with our students with disabilities in all subject areas. For example, there has been a historical decline in the performance of elementary school students in ELA for 4 years as a result of new MA State Frameworks and cuts to both Tier II support staff and curriculum leadership, and our Pupil Performance Index (PPI) for students with disabilities is below the state average. The following sections will explore our needs in these areas in more detail.

Based on 2014 MCAS state test data, the Groton-Dunstable District's performance for students with disabilities is below the state average and at a 5-year low. For our students with disabilities, district-wide, our performance index scores

continue to decrease from 62 in 2012 to 47 in 2013 to 42 in 2014. The 2012 to 2013 state reports showed that comparable districts did not have a similar significant downward trend, such as Lynnfield who went from (73 to 75) or Newburyport (who went from 53 to 60). Based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, our overall percentage of special education students in the district has increased from 13.8 % in 2009-2010 to 14.8 % in FY15. According to a report developed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), the overall number of special education students has risen from 385 in 2010-2011 to 392 as of October of 2014. The need to address special education students was echoed by staff survey data that identified “a need to improve intervention and support for special needs students” as a major theme for improvement. This was also identified in the open forums for town and elected school officials who identified support for students with IEP coverage as an area of concern.

The MCAS was not fully aligned to the new Massachusetts State Frameworks so it was not as rigorous as the PARCC and students had all day to complete the test, as opposed to only 75 minutes. As expected, both GD and the state saw a decrease in PARCC scores, so our analysis focused on our scores relative to the state and how those scores increased or decreased from 2014 to 2015. Even this is not an exact comparison, though, as districts had the option to either take a computer-based version of the PARCC or a paper and pencil version. In Groton-Dunstable, our students took the computer-based assessment. In a press release from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) dated September 21, it noted that, “student achievement on PARCC for those who took the test on a computer appears to

have been lower than for students who took MCAS.” As the board did vote to eventually require an online assessment, we will continue to review our assessment results against ourselves to determine in-district growth. Because the state did not disaggregate the pilot year data, we can only compare our achievement to the PARCC state averages, which includes both paper and pencil as well as online assessments. We have requested disaggregated scores from the state to allow us to see a more accurate district to state comparison in future years. One variable that will affect our scores in relationship to the state (regardless of test format) is whether comparison districts aligned curriculum to the new frameworks more readily than Groton-Dunstable. The content frameworks for ELA and math were adopted in December of 2010 but attempts in our district to align curriculum materials with these state standards only began in earnest during the 2015-2016 school year and will not be completely phased in and implemented with expertise for the next three to five years.

Analysis of Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology Function

“Instructional Materials and Equipment” includes the following categories of spending as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and reported annually by all districts to the state.

- Textbooks and Related Software/Media Materials
- Other Instructional Materials
- Instructional Equipment
- General Supplies
- Other Instructional Services
- Instructional Technology
- Classroom (Laboratory) Instructional Technology

- Other Instructional Hardware
- Instructional Software

Our instructional materials expenditures are significantly lower than the BIC (Best in Class) districts (see Appendix A). Average spending on instructional materials in BIC districts for FY14 was \$410 per pupil (PPE) (most current data available). The state average was \$409/PPE. Our FY14 PPE in Groton-Dunstable was \$124. This was a decrease from \$207/PPE in FY13.

This significant gap impacts the district's ability to purchase textbooks, adopt new curriculum for students, purchase technology for teachers and students to maximize learning outcomes, and other instructional supplies. These expenditures, positively impact student achievement (Jacques & Brorsen, 2002). Our funds need to increase significantly if we are to align with past budget amounts, state averages, or best in class district spending. These needs are ever increasing, especially staff devices should we restore positions that were cut in past budget cycles.

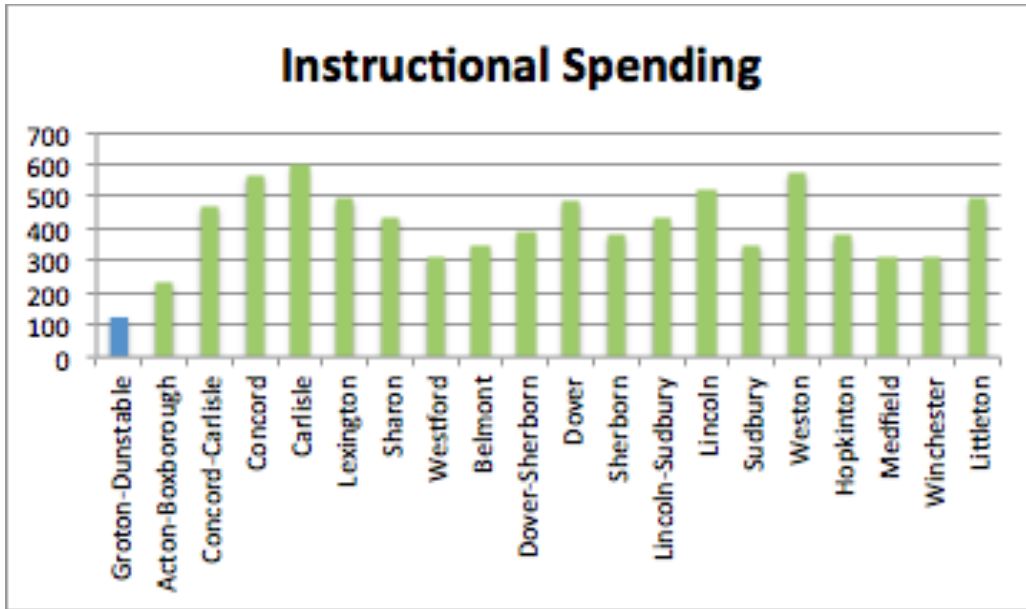


Figure 1: Instructional Spending in Best in Class Districts

School Spending Levels

As shared in last year’s proposed budget booklet, we had some major budget cuts in our FY15 budget to help address the FY14 budget gap. Thus, in FY16 we restored the supply lines to FY14 amounts. For example, textbook lines increased \$63,490 and teaching supplies increased \$32,241 to FY14 levels. However, upon working with district leaders over the summer to identify past cuts, it was noted that even the FY16 numbers (although much higher than FY15) were not even up to the amount given to the district back in FY10 for supplies and materials and were not sufficient to cover a review and renewal sequence for all courses, nor to meet the demands of materials that align with state standards changes. Thus, we conducted an analysis of school spending levels in FY10, FY11, and FY16. In FY10 Boutwell, Florence Roche, Swallow Union, the Middle School, and the High School had a total budget of \$431,639 to be spent on PD, textbooks, supplies, etc. These same accounts

were cut in FY11 to \$314,164. In FY16, the total supply budget is \$48,805 less than FY10. We should note that in 2010, Instructional Supplies spending for G-D was 14th lowest in the state.

- In FY10, Boutwell's adopted budget was \$9,522; FY11 it was \$10,223; and in FY16 the Budget is \$10,197. There were no major changes in the Boutwell budget during the 3 years analyzed.
- In FY10, Florence Roche's adopted budget was \$76,115; FY11 it was \$41,672; and in FY16 the Budget is \$67,000. FY10's budget was \$34,443 higher than FY11's budget. The big reason for this was due to an additional \$15,000 in FY10's textbook line and \$13,673 in the teaching supplies line. FY16's budget is \$25,328 more than FY11's but \$9,115 less than FY10's. FY16's teaching supplies are up \$12,500 from FY11's level and textbooks are also up \$6,500. There is also a \$3,000 increase in acquisition of new equipment in FY16.
- In FY10, Swallow Union's adopted budget was \$49,600; FY11 it was \$30,992; and in FY16 the Budget is \$38,500. FY10's budget was \$18,608 higher than FY11's due to a larger than normal increase in teacher PD, library books, and teaching supplies. In FY16, the school's budget is up \$7,508 from FY11's but still down \$11,100 from FY10. Increases from FY11's level in Textbooks and PD made up most of the difference in FY16.
- In FY10, the Middle School's adopted budget was \$153,001; FY11 it was \$60,725; and in FY16 the Budget is \$106,540. In FY10, the district budgeted \$50,140 for Middle School teaching supplies and nothing in FY11 in this line. Office supplies were also budgeted at \$9,000 for both FY10 and FY11 which was

roughly 3 times FY16's amount. MS Special Education supplies were also \$2,836 higher in FY10 than in FY11. Overall, FY10's budget was \$92,276 higher than FY11's budget. In FY16, it was up to \$106,540 but still \$46,461 less than FY10. There was a heavy investment in MS textbooks and teaching supplies, which made up the \$45,815 difference between FY11 and FY16.

- In FY10, the High School's adopted budget was \$143,401; FY11 it was \$170,552; and in FY16 the Budget is \$160,597. FY10's budget was \$27,515 less than FY11's budget. The big reason for this was due to the \$30,000 line item for the NEASC-Accreditation team. If this line was leveled funded from FY10's budget, the difference between the 2 years would be \$-349. That being said, the high school discretionary spending in FY16 is still down \$9,955 from FY11.

In summary, we have never gotten back to the FY10 budget numbers (see Figure 2: Comparative school spending levels).

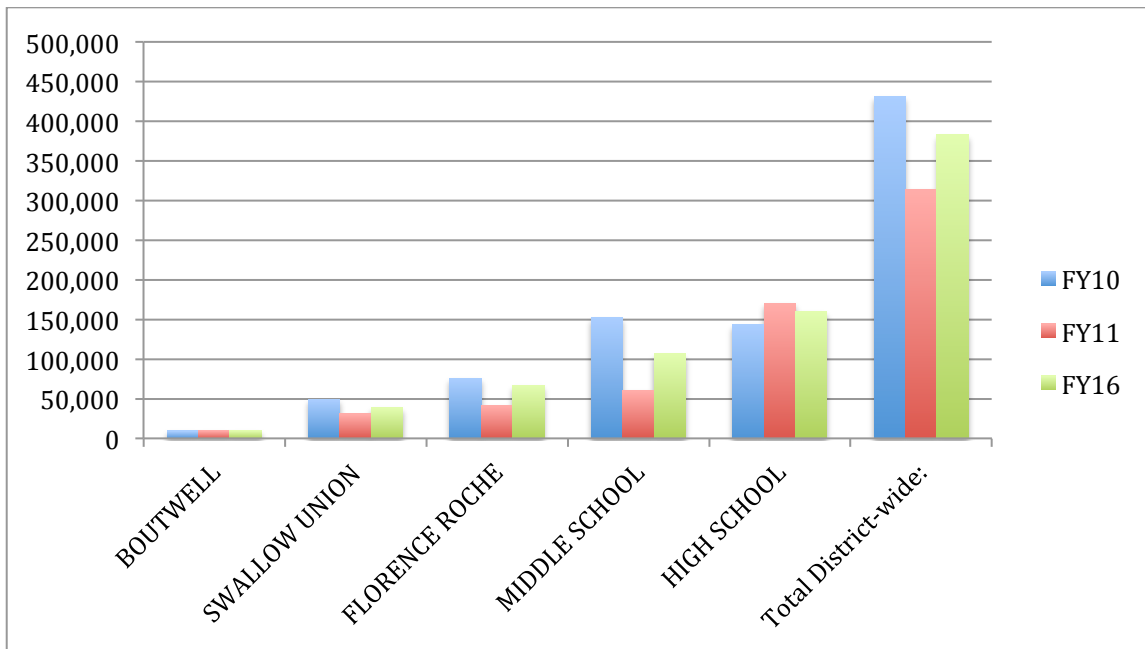


Figure 2: Comparative school spending levels

Some big changes in a few functions made most of the difference (District-wide “DW” means all 5 schools together). Most cuts have been a result of budget cuts but the consolidation of printers and copiers was done as a cost savings measure.

- The DW office supplies and printing/advertising FY16 amount is down \$21,375 from FY10. Some of this is a product of consolidation and others are a product of across the board budget cuts.
- DW Professional development (PD) is down \$12,703 in FY16 from FY10’s and FY11’s level. DW textbooks are at a high in FY16; \$60,016 higher than FY10 and \$25,023 higher than FY11. One of the factors for this increase has been attributed to the need recently to purchase materials for some departments who had not been part of a regular renewal cycle. In addition, associated text costs have increased sharply with the addition of online textbook subscriptions. Continued increases are needed to meet the alignment requirements of up to date state standards documents.
- FY16’s DW library supplies/books/subscriptions levels are \$29,518 lower than FY10 and \$16,259 lower than FY11.
- DW teaching supplies are \$16,353 lower in FY16 than FY10 levels; big drop from FY10 to FY11 (-\$87,049).

Substitute Cost Review

Currently, we pay teacher substitutes \$65 for their first 30 days of substitute teaching and \$75 per day thereafter. Half day substitutes are paid \$37.50. On average, from FY11-FY15, we had 3,065 paid substitute days per year which is an expense amount of \$229,875 annually.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Massachusetts Association of School Personnel Administrators (MASPA), the average initial pay rate of substitute teachers in the state is \$75.36. After thirty (30) days in the same assignment, it increases to \$78.11. Our rate after 30 days of substitute teaching, therefore, is competitive, but significantly lower during the first 30 days.

When examining local districts, the same pattern emerges. The average starting sub rate in MASPA's recent survey of districts in the Merrimack Valley was \$75. One potential barrier to increasing our substitute pool is that for the first 30 days of subbing, our substitutes receive \$10/less per day than our surrounding towns. For example, Westford, Nashoba Regional, and Harvard start at \$75/per day, while Ayer-Shirley pays \$12/hour which is \$78/day. Our subs would have to report for duty 30 times before earning the wage they can earn next door. This analysis will be shared with the Personnel and Negotiations sub-committee to define recommendations (if any) for future substitute pay.

Management and Operations

Variability in State Aid

In FY09, Chapter 70 went down 7.8%, Chapter 71 -3.9%, and CB -25.9%.

Chapter 70 went up in 2010 but the decline continued in Chapter 71 and Circuit Breaker. If you take a look at the first tab of the E&D History spreadsheet on the following page, you can see an 11-year history of E&D and how it was used. The second tab is a 6 year history of revenue. So, you can see that this started before 2012. The auditors made it clear in their agreed upon procedures that they would not go back more than 2-3 years. We had a budget of \$12,500 and going back any further would have required more money than we had.

Table 1: FY05-FY15 Budget/Revenue History

FY05-FY15 BUDGET/REVENUE HISTORY											
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Approved Budget (GF)	30,270,924	32,049,088	32,915,642	36,090,827	35,893,274	36,003,476	35,115,832	34,891,906	34,891,906	35,200,000	35,696,179
Amended Budget (GF)	30,270,924	31,949,088	33,020,142	34,608,773	35,905,774	35,967,807	35,115,832	34,891,906	34,891,906	35,813,533	35,696,179
	% change	5.5%	3.4%	4.8%	3.7%	0.2%	-2.4%	-0.6%	0.0%	2.6%	-0.3%
Chapter 70 (State Aid)	9,547,245	9,690,045	10,590,960	10,757,109	9,914,811	10,858,434	10,224,085	10,278,973	10,384,573	10,449,473	10,513,273
	% change	1.5%	9.3%	1.6%	-7.8%	9.5%	-5.8%	0.5%	1.0%	0.6%	0.6%
Chapter 71 (Transp Aid)	581,420	672,911	903,225	926,641	890,730	534,352	563,508	535,653	527,609	596,745	772,490
	% change	15.7%	34.2%	2.6%	-3.9%	-40.0%	5.5%	-4.9%	-1.5%	13.1%	29.5%
Circuit Breaker (Spec. Ed Aid)	576,067	588,501	652,955	890,573	659,805	393,491	399,362	626,066	723,378	779,962	823,512
	% change	2.2%	11.0%	36.4%	-25.9%	-40.4%	1.5%	56.8%	15.5%	7.8%	5.6%
Total State Aids	10,704,732	10,951,457	12,147,140	12,574,323	11,465,346	11,786,277	11,186,955	11,440,692	11,635,560	11,826,180	12,109,275
	% change	2.3%	10.9%	3.5%	-8.8%	2.8%	-5.1%	2.3%	1.7%	1.6%	2.4%
Excess&Deficiency-funding source for operating	168,000	500,000	-	85,000	75,000	350,000	350,000	400,000	450,000	1,063,533	-
Excess&Deficiency-funding source for debt reduction		134,821	36,093	437,872				178,361	231,478		
SFSF/ARRA/Ed Jobs/RTTT (State Aid)					1,165,224	542,808	730,542	355,908			
Federal/State Grants	817,931	828,720	845,223	877,793	865,037	830,642	832,473	833,229	808,348	845,180	759,829
				Totals:	2,030,261	1,373,450	1,563,015	1,189,137			
	% change	1.3%	2.0%	3.9%	131.3%	58.8%	88.2%	42.8%	-3.0%	4.6%	-10.1%
Total Amount:	31,664,922	33,366,309	34,518,320	36,377,139	38,595,840	37,734,748	37,078,209	36,707,109	36,423,632	37,438,675	37,279,520
	% change	5.4%	3.5%	5.4%	6.1%	-2.2%	-1.7%	-1.0%	-0.8%	2.8%	-0.4%

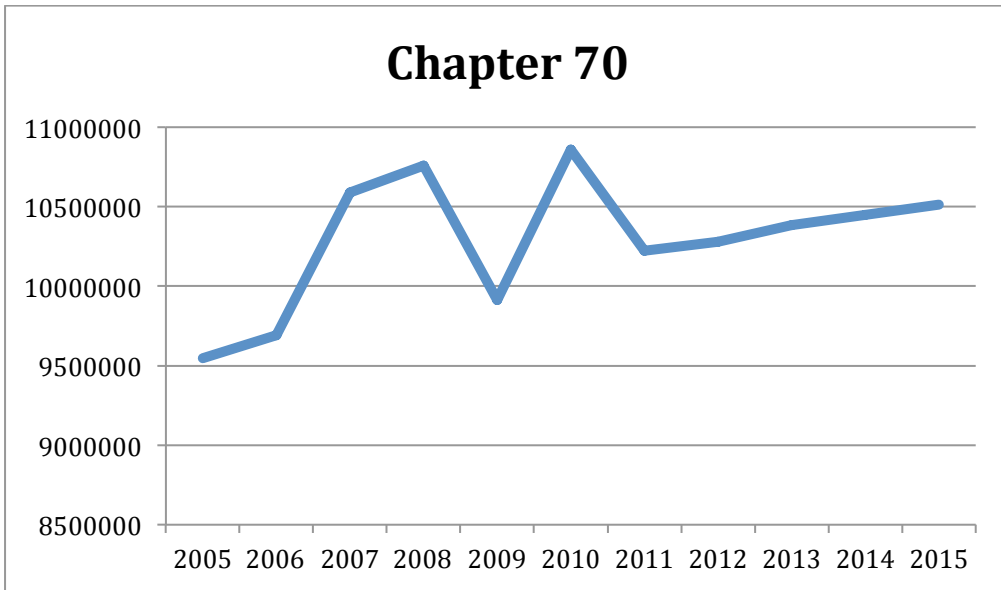


Figure 3: Variability in Chapter 70 funding

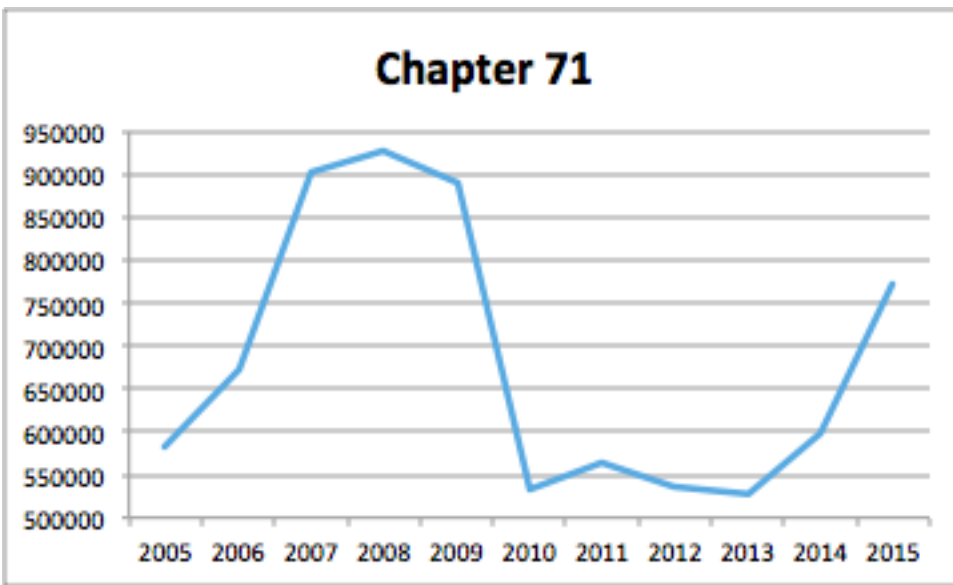


Figure 4: Variability in Chapter 71 funding

Table 2: E&D History: FY04 through FY15

E & D HISTORY - FY2004 THROUGH FY2015						
Fiscal Year	Voted to Reserve for Expenditure	Reserve to Reduce Debt Expenditure	Date Certified (is in next FY from results being certified)	Amount Certified	Actual Used of E&D per Audited Financial Statements	Comments
2004	168,000		7/1/14	1,620,627.00		excess E&D was \$107,081, returned to towns in form of reduced assessment
2005	750,000	134,821	7/1/05	767,564	284,807	
2006	79,500	65,990	7/1/06	1,254,594	836,485	actual used includes \$250,000 for Prescott Cap Project
2007	85,000	371,882	7/1/07	879,046	170,490	
2008	-		7/1/08	1,290,376	522,872	
2009	350,000		7/1/09	985,194	212,689	
2010	350,000		7/1/10	965,114	388,132	Funding source for budget
2011	400,000		7/1/11	1,390,890	350,000	Funding source for budget
2012	450,000	178,361	7/1/12	1,349,249	578,361	Funding source for budget
2013	1,063,533	231,478	7/1/13	613,533	681,478	Funding source for budget
2014	-		7/1/14	374,263	1,063,533	Funding source for budget
2015	-		7/1/15	800,000	-	Estimate to be certified
					↑	
					taken from amount certified in the prior year	

There were years that we received a reduced assessment and a level fund assessment. But the state aid formula does not adjust for the current costs for such things as health insurance, transportation costs, and special education costs. This formula is currently being reviewed, and suggestions have been made to more accurately reflect the realistic insurance and special education costs, but we do not anticipate changes for FY17 and if enrollment is no longer held harmless for districts we may even see a potential decline in state aid. As there is a structural deficit in this formula and until this is addressed at the state level, districts will continue to rely on more assessment money to cover costs.

E&D is available to cover risk in the budget. Our current E&D are not at the recommended levels. We must work over the next few years to increase our E&D to recommended levels (not to exceed 5%). As you can see on the spreadsheet, we

received less Chapter 70 funds in 2015 than 2008. Also, look at the Chapter 71 reimbursement trends. We received grants that helped offset the reduced state aid but not nearly enough.

The state's contribution of Chapter 70 doubled between 1993 and 2003. Since 2003, Chapter 70 has been cut almost 350 million. So there was more Chapter 70 money coming to districts in 2003 than today. Also, look at the Chapter 71 reimbursement. Costs keep going up but we are not receiving nearly enough. The district has never received the 100% chapter 71 transportation reimbursement promised when we regionalized. The timing of state aid (it gets solidified after our town budget cycle) and the unpredictability of the percentages we receive from one year to the next, make it difficult for precise budgeting or accurate long range planning.

OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits)

The District recently had its actuarial valuation for FY15 and FY16 done by Odyssey Advisors to determine an updated understanding of our OPEB liability. This is required every two years. The "Plan" experience (GDRSD OPEB Plan for health, dental, and life) was less favorable than expected which was mainly due to an increase in the number of retirees (156 to 205), the introduction of a more conservative mortality table, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) excise tax. The ACA imposed an excise tax on high-cost health plans to take effect in 2018. Over the two year period the Actuarial Accrued Liability (AAL), which is the plan benefits and expenses which is not provided for by future normal costs, went from \$24,735,500 as of 7/1/12 to \$28,694,348 as of 7/1/14 for an increase of \$3,958,848.

As of 7-1-14, the district has a normal cost (present value contribution needed to fund benefits) during the year of approximately \$1,267,230. The district share of the costs are up \$192,188. The normal cost plus the Amortization of the Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability gives us our annual required contribution (better known as our ARC). The new ARC is \$2,523,567. We must amortize the accrued benefits in place at the adoption of the Government Accounting Standards Board's requirements for accounting and financial reporting by employers for postemployment benefits other than pensions, over a period of 30 years and that continuing annual amortization payment is \$1,256,337. The ARC represents a level of funding that, if paid on an ongoing basis, is projected to cover normal cost each year and amortize any unfunded actuarial liabilities over a period not to exceed 30 years. The Annual OPEB expense went from \$2,540,823 to \$2,823,418 for an increase of \$282,595. The District's Net OPEB obligation increased from \$10,171,249 as of 6/30/13 to \$13,934,666 at the end of FY16.

Municipal Spending Comparisons

The school committee reviewed municipal spending at a workshop in September of 2015. Below is a summary of the data reviewed as well as some take-aways around town comparisons. For a larger list of financial numbers, please see Appendix B.

- The average single family home values in our two towns are within 2%.
- Groton's average single family tax bill is 12% higher than Dunstable's.
- Wealth, per the state for education funding purposes, is based on income and EQV. Equalized Valuation (EQV), is the full and fair cash value of all taxable property in a municipality. EQV per capita in both towns is nearly equal.

- Dunstable's per capita income is 7.5% higher than Groton's.

In 2000, the total percentage of the budget spent on Education in Groton was 57.5 % and in Dunstable it was 67.9%. In 2014, the total percentage of spending on education is less. In Groton it is 53.5% and in Dunstable it is 58.9%. This represents a percentage loss of funding going toward the schools of 4% in Groton and 9% in Dunstable.

The FY16 operating assessment for Dunstable is \$4,779,790 while Groton's is \$17,097,405. Currently, the district is engaging in a review of the regional agreement. According to a Guidance Document for Regional School Districts from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

“The calculation of members’ assessments pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. c. 70 S6. Each such assessment shall be the sum of the following amounts (i) the member’s required local contribution to the regional school district as determined by the Commissioner; (ii) the member’s share of that portion of the regional school district’s net school spending, as defined by M.G.L. c. 70 s. 2, that exceeds the total required local contribution for all members, this share to be allocated pursuant to the assessment provisions of the regional agreement; and (iii) the member’s share of costs for transportation, capital project debt service, other capital costs, and all other expenditures not included in the regional school district’s net school spending, this share to be allocated pursuant to the assessment provisions of the regional agreement...The member’s required local contribution as determined by the Commissioner of Education in accordance with Chapter 70 o Any additional share of the region’s net school spending that exceeds the total required contribution, this share to be allocated to each member pursuant to the assessment provisions of the regional school district agreement. o Transportation and other non-net school spending costs allocated to each member pursuant to the assessment provisions of the regional school district agreement. o Capital cost allocated to each member pursuant to the assessment provisions of the regional school district agreement. “

Table 3: GDRSD Historic Revenue Trend Analysis

GDRSD Historic Revenue Trend Analysis

Takeaways:

Since 2000 the Required Net School Spending, the state-established minimum that must be spent on schools, has more than doubled (208% increase).

Since 2000 our Chapter 70 (State Education Funding) has fallen from 49% of the Required Net School Spending to 35%.

In 2005 Groton Dunstable spent 21% more than the minimum required by the state. In 2015 we spent only 2.5% more than the minimum required.

The Chapter 70 formula is based in part on district enrollment data. To date our Chapter 70 funding has not been reduced to reflect our current enrollment dip. If this adjustment were made, the impact to GD would be approximately \$1.5 million annually.

Fiscal Year	Foundation Budget	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Actual Net School Spending	Spending Over Required NSS		Chapter 70 % of Req'd. NSS Enrollment	
						Dollars	Percent	% of Req'd. NSS	Enrollment
2000	\$13,895,517	\$7,179,756	\$6,904,616	\$14,084,372	\$15,377,815	\$1,293,443	9.2%	49.02%	2,377
2005	\$19,364,397	\$9,817,152	\$9,547,245	\$19,364,397	\$23,387,749	\$4,023,352	20.8%	49.30%	2,858
2010	\$23,587,738	\$16,063,245	\$10,858,434	\$26,921,679	\$27,971,858	\$1,050,179	3.9%	40.33%	2,757
2015	\$23,421,974	\$18,828,192	\$10,513,273	\$29,341,465	\$30,067,525	\$726,060	2.5%	35.83%	2,552

Net School Spending excludes capital expenditures, transportation, grants and revolving funds.

Required Net School Spending is the state-established minimum that must be spent on schools, including carryovers from prior years.

Table 4: Percent of Total Municipal Spending (by category)

	Dunstable			Groton		
	2000	2014		2000	2014	
	% of total	% of total	% change	% of total	% of total	% change
General Government	5.7	4.8	-0.9	7.2	6.6	-0.7
Police, Fire & Public Safety	10.7	14.0	3.2	11.2	10.9	-0.2
Education	67.9	58.9	-9.0	57.5	53.5	-4.0
Public Works	6.0	8.7	2.7	6.4	6.5	0.1
Human Services	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.8	0.0
Culture & Recreation	3.0	2.6	-0.4	3.4	4.8	1.5
Debt Service	2.9	3.1	0.2	8.9	4.2	-4.7
Fixed Costs	3.1	6.1	3.0	4.5	9.6	5.1
Intergovernmental & Other	0.3	1.4	1.1	0.2	3.2	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	

Family and Community Engagement

School Committee Communication

The school committee formed the Public Communications & Community Engagement (PCCE) Advisory Committee this year. The aim was to gather a group of representatives from various stakeholder groups (and those with professional communication backgrounds) to help assess current school committee communication and bring forward recommendations for the full committee.

During their assessment report, the advisory committee shared that “Financial Information” and “District Issues” (needs, goals, plans, etc.) are the most urgent communication areas and represent the most significant opportunities for the SC (see overall ratings below) to engage with the greater community.

Table 5: District Communication Needs

	Urgency/ Priority
Financial Information	Highest
District Issues (Big Picture)	High
Schedule/Calendar	Moderate
Performance Data	Moderate
Topical/Trending	Low
Curriculum News	Low
District News	Low

The committee determined the following levels of effectiveness for outreach methods by stakeholder group. For example, digital forms of communication are very effective for parents and staff but not necessarily effective for households with no kids who do not frequent our digital platforms (our website, school messenger, etc.).

Table 6: Channel Effectiveness in Reaching Audiences

Channel effectiveness in reaching audiences											
	School Orgs	Parents	Staff	Media	New Residents	Alumni	Town Off.	Town Dept Heads	Business Leaders	Seniors	HH No Kids
Digital	Very	Very	Very	Somewhat	Somewhat	Effective	Not	Effective	Somewhat	Somewhat	Not
People	Very	Effective	Somewhat	Somewhat	Effective	Not	Effective	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat
Live	Effective	Not	Somewhat	Effective	Not	Not	Not	Effective	Somewhat	Effective	Not
Mobile	Effective	Effective	Effective	Effective	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not		Not
Print	Effective	Effective	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat	Effective	Effective	Effective	Very	Somewhat
Places	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Somewhat	Somewhat	Not	Effective	Somewhat

The committee’s assessment of school committee communication included the three following conclusions:

- Current communications practices meet minimum legal requirements, but are insufficient to effectively inform the public on District “health,” direction, and needs of the District.
- Resource constraints have been a historical limiting factor in communications effectiveness, despite widespread agreement on its importance.
- A strategic mix of communications channels will likely be required to communicate key messages to key constituent groups.

Recommendations of this committee were presented on November 18, 2015 and will be reviewed by the school committee in an upcoming workshop. The recommendations for enhanced school committee communication include focusing on big picture issues (values, vision, mission, policy, goals) of the community, communicating regularly and purposefully, engaging with key stakeholders (including exploring a key communicator

network model), and enhancing communication methods to include digital, paper, and in-person methods.

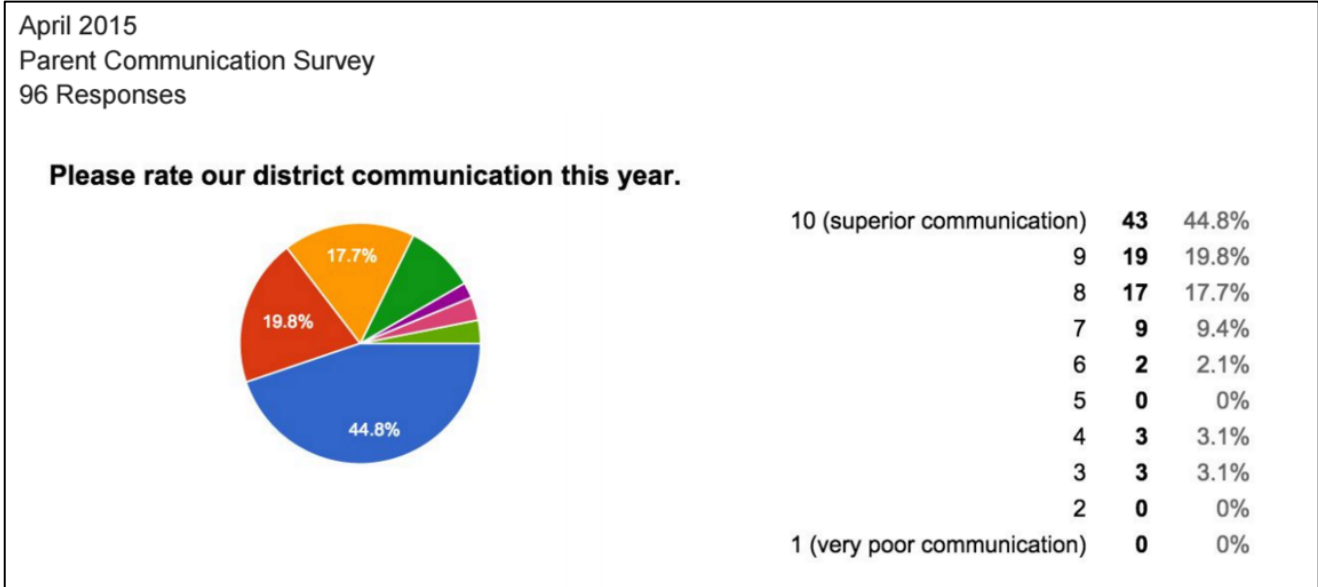


Figure 5: Spring 2015 District Communication Results

The district as a whole has worked to improve communication with stakeholders. In our October 2014 data (as referenced in the Superintendent’s entry plan findings), parents listed email (97%), automated phone messages (62%), and in-person conferences (47%) as the top three preferred communication methods. There were 527 responses to our Parent Communication Survey in the fall of 2014. Out of a possible rating of 10, the overall rating was 7.3. As you can see below, the spring 2015 data (96 respondents), demonstrated that the overall percentage of communication satisfaction for the district increased to an average rating of 8.7. Although initial data is showing gains, the spring 2015 responses articulated a desire to have more work done on communication tools such as the website. Thus, in the fall of 2015, the district has introduced a new website with features such a calendar that incorporates district and school specific events.

Human Resources/Professional Culture

What is High Quality Professional Development?

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education outlines standards for high quality professional development (HQPD), which align to research on best practice in professional development and its impact on increasing student outcomes.

The ten standards that make up the Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development:

1. HQPD has clear goals and objectives relevant to desired student outcomes.
2. HQPD aligns with state, district, school, and/or educator goals or priorities.
3. HQPD is designed based on the analysis of data relevant to the identified goals, objectives, and audience.
4. HQPD is assessed to ensure that it is meeting the targeted goals and objectives.
5. HQPD promotes collaboration among educators to encourage sharing of ideas and working together to achieve the identified goals and objectives.
6. HQPD advances an educator's ability to apply learnings from the professional development to his/her particular content and/or context.
7. HQPD models good pedagogical practice and applies knowledge of adult learning theory to engage educators.
8. HQPD makes use of relevant resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are met.
9. HQPD is taught or facilitated by a professional who is knowledgeable about the identified objectives.

10. HQPD sessions connect and build upon each other to provide a coherent and useful learning experience for educators.

Peer-reviewed research argues that the three most important aspects in a professional development program are time span, coherence, and focus on content (Hill & Wellesley College, 2012). Research suggests that in order to have any impact on student achievement, staff must receive a minimum of 14 hours of study in the same professional development focus area (Hill & Wellesley College, 2012). Teachers who receive substantial professional development (intensive, sustained and strongly implemented)—an average of 49 hours a year— can boost their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points (Chung Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). Coherence is another important aspect of professional development as it requires teachers to learn new content or skills, implement the new techniques, and then follow-up with reflection in a future professional development session (aligns to MA HQPD # 6 and #10). Lastly, professional development is more effective when it is collaborative and focused on content and specific instructional strategies (aligns to MA HQPD # 5).

Professional Development in Groton-Dunstable

In the fall of 2014, GDRSD developed a PD committee to design PD offerings that would meet the professional development needs of our staff and ensure that our PD offerings were aligned to the MA HQPD standards (above). Our work began with an analysis of the 2014 TELL Mass results (see Appendix A), in which a vast majority of our teachers were not satisfied with our professional development model.

Based on this analysis, we determined our greatest needs were additional resources and time for PD, and more differentiated offerings. We were able to make

gains in these areas by implementing our multi-part series, in-service courses, and PD book clubs, but we still have room for growth. In order to continue to increase satisfaction rates, we must eliminate some of the barriers that prevent us from offering additional resources and time for PD. This analysis will first discuss the strengths of our current PD model and then discuss our needs in terms of PD scheduling and resources.

Existing PD Model

The GDPD Committee is committed to offering a variety of PD options to meet the needs of our diverse staff. We currently have a teacher induction program where our facilitator pairs new teachers with high quality mentors and also provides additional mentoring experiences for 50 additional hours after the induction year. For all staff, we offer a number of multi-part series, in-service courses, graduate courses through Fitchburg State, PD book-clubs, department meetings, and math and literacy coaches at the K-4 level. To learn more about our PD program, view the [2015-2016 PD Catalogue](#).

PD Scheduling: Needs Assessment

As mentioned previously, to see any gains in student achievement, PD offerings need to be a minimum of 14 hours in the same PD area. For significant gains, districts should schedule 49 hours in the same PD area, which is structured in a coherent way and focused on content. We currently do not have 49 hours to build PD into our schedule. Although we offer many options after school, such as inservice courses, graduate courses, and PD book clubs (and stagger these so staff can access them all) many staff members have other engagements and do not participate in these sessions.

Table 7: Optional Professional Development Offerings for 15-16

PD Offering	Title	Hours
Graduate course, 3 credits	Mastering the Art of Writing using Universal Design for Learning	67.5
Graduate course, 3 credits	Introduction to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	67.5
Graduate course, 3 credits	Teaching Mathematics in the 21st century	67.5
Graduate course, 3 credits	Google Apps for Education	67.5
Graduate course, 1 credit	Teaching ELL students	22.5
In-service course	Unpacking Eureka, K-8	15
In-service course	Using Curriculum-Based Assessment to Inform Instruction	15
In-service course	ELL Program Evaluation	15
Book club	Titles Vary	10
Course Reimbursement	Courses Vary	22.5-67.5

In addition to our optional offerings, we have embedded offerings, which are built into our schedule. All staff have access these professional development options.

Table 8: Embedded PD Offerings 15-16

PD Offering	Description	Hours
Multi Part Series	Topics Vary /Choices Offered	10
Coaching	ELA and Math (K-4)	9
Building Based PD Days	Mutually Agreed Upon	6
Elementary half days	Mutually Agreed Upon	12

Although we have a number of options available to our staff, our current PD calendar only provides 18.5 hours of embedded, required professional development to all staff. For 2015-2016, we have one full PD day (October 13) and four (4) half curriculum days. Two (2) of these days are coordinated at the building level and two (2) are planned at the district level, per the Unit A contract. In addition, PK-4 staff have an additional four (4) half days for a total of 30.5 hours.

To examine our time for PD in comparison to high-performing districts, our curriculum office examined the district calendars and/or contacted the curriculum office of all “Best in Class” (BIC) districts, to determine how much time was scheduled for embedded PD in their calendars.

Table 9: Elementary School Best-in-Class PD Analysis

District	Details	PD Hours
Groton-Dunstable	1 full day and 8 half days, elementary	30.5
Acton-Boxborough	1 full day and 3 half days, all staff Additional half day every other Thursday, elementary	78.5
Concord, PK-8	Half day every Tuesday, K-8	156
Carlisle, PK-8	3 full days and 14 half days	61.5
Lexington	1 full day and 4 half days, all staff All elementary teachers: half day every Thursday	174.5
Sharon	7 half days, all staff	21
Westford	2 full days and 6 half days, all staff	31
Belmont	1 full day, 8 half days, elementary	30.5
Dover-Sherborn	1 full day, 19 half days, elementary	66.5
Lincoln, K-8	Half day every Wednesday	96
Sudbury, K-8	2 full days and 2 half days a month for a total of 18 half days	67

Weston	4 full days, 7 half days, all staff	47
Hopkinton	3 full days, all staff 6 additional half days, elementary	19.5
Medfield	4 full days and 4 half days, all staff	38
Winchester	1 full day and 9 half days	33.5

Elementary Teacher PD Analysis

It is clear that our elementary teachers receive significantly less scheduled PD than the average for BIC districts. On average, elementary teachers in BIC districts receive 64.7 scheduled hours of PD compared to our 30.5. See chart for a visual representation. Groton-Dunstable is in blue. All districts with more PD time are coded in green.

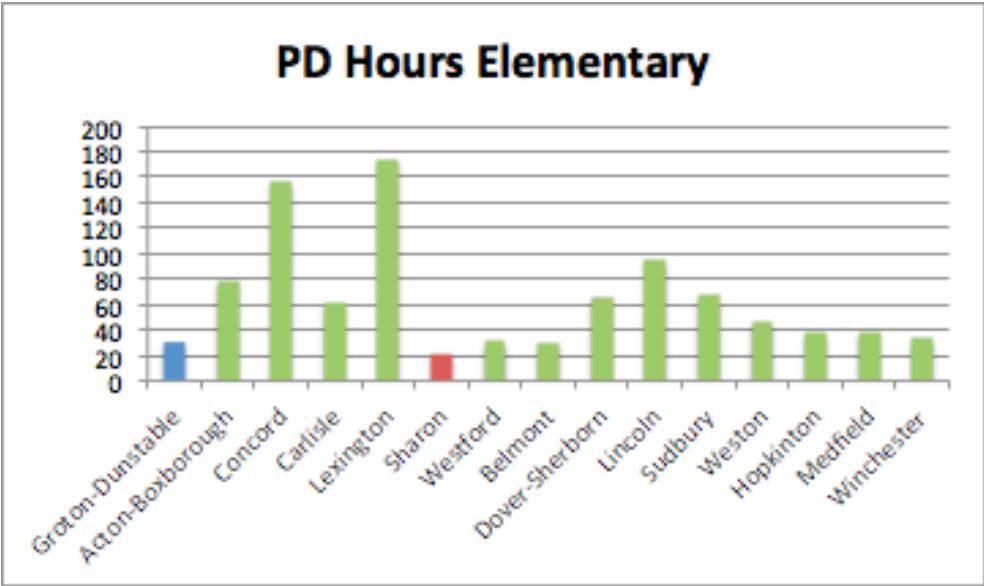


Figure 6: Elementary School PD Time in GD vs. BIC

Many BIC districts have significantly more time scheduled for PD than Groton-Dunstable. Only one district (Sharon) has less scheduled time in their calendar, and five

districts provide similar time (Westford, Belmont, Hopkinton, Medfield, and Winchester). When speaking to three of these districts, however, it is clear that they offer additional PD time to their elementary teachers that is not accounted for in their district calendar. Specifically, when speaking to district leaders in Sharon, Westford, and Medfield, we learned that in all three districts, each school has one hour after-school curriculum PD meeting each month (in addition to a staff meeting), which adds an additional 10 hours to their PD schedule. Although we have two staff meetings a month in GD, these are not scheduled for embedded PD.

We currently employ additional strategies to increase our hours of PD, K-4, but these are not sustainable. For example, we have math and literacy coaches who model lessons and run professional development sessions during release time (when the district pays for substitutes so the teachers can meet together and receive PD). This year, our K-4 staff will have four release days for PD, which brings their total to 56.5, which is best practice, but the model is not sustainable as we cannot rely on release time to provide teachers with the PD they need (due to the loss of instructional time and cost for substitutes. This year, more than half of the substitute coverage was funded by a generous GDEF grant, while the other half is funded by a Title IIA grant. We have to be cautious of relying on outside funding sources such as GDEF to cover these costs.

We need a more sustainable model to provide additional PD time to our elementary teachers. One option would be to use one of the staff meetings each month to provide cohesive, collaborative PD focused in the same PD area. This would increase PD hours by 10 hours and align more closely with BIC hours. Another option is to schedule additional PD time into our district calendar for our elementary teachers.

Since elementary students only need 900 hours of instruction (versus 990 hours for middle and high school), we could schedule additional half days. We could do this and still ensure the state required time on learning days (180) and hours (900 for elementary students).

Table 10: Secondary Teacher PD Analysis in Best-in-Class

District	Details	PD Hours
Groton-Dunstable	1 full day and 4 half days, secondary	18.5
Acton-Boxborough	1 full day and 3 half days, all staff	15.5
Concord-Carlisle	4 full days 9-12, high school	26
Lexington	1 full day and 4 half days, all staff	18.5
Sharon	7 half days, all staff	21
Westford	2 full days and 6 half days, all staff	31
Belmont	1 full day, 8 half days	30.5
Dover-Sherborn	1 full day, 6 half days, secondary	24.5
Lincoln-Sudbury	3 full days, high school	19.5
Weston	4 full days, 7 half days, all staff	47
Hopkinton	3 full days, all staff	19.5
Medfield	4 full days and 4 half days, all staff	38
Winchester	1 full day and 3 half days, high school	15.5

Although our middle school and high school teachers only have 18.5 hours of required PD per year, this is similar to other high performing districts in the area. This is slightly lower than the average time scheduled in BIC districts (25.4) but the gap is narrower than with our elementary teachers. To increase our offering time, we may want to consider scheduling PD meeting time at this level as well, for an additional 10 hours.

Currently, one meeting a month is used for staff meetings and the other is for department meetings. Although these meetings may incorporate some PD, it is not required, sustained, or cohesive.

PD Resources/Funding: Needs Assessment

A research study, designed to determine the influence of increased spending in specific expenditures on student achievement, found that increasing instructional expenditures and instructional staff support services have the most significant increase on student achievement.

Jacques and Brorsen (2002) note, “Instructional staff support services include activities associated with assisting instructional staff with content and provide teachers with concepts and tools that enhance the learning process. This includes ‘in service’ training such as workshops, demonstrations, school visits, and courses for college credit. Help in developing curriculum and instruction techniques are included here as well as media services such as library, audiovisual, educational television, and computer assisted instruction services” (p.999). Given this research, it is troubling to examine our need for increased funding in professional development and instructional supplies. An analysis follows.

“Professional Development and Leadership Development” includes the following categories of spending as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and reported annually by all districts to the state.

- Professional Development Leadership Development
- Teacher/Instructional Staff-Professional Days - Staff who participate in in-service days beyond the contractual classroom days exceeding the 180-day requirement. Include stipends for professional staff providing or receiving professional development services beyond the length of a regular school day.

- Substitutes for Teachers/Instructional Staff at Professional Development Activities
- Professional Development Stipends, Providers and Expenses -Instructional supervisors, teachers and other professional staff who spend one-half or more of their time providing teacher training and implementation. Include full time or prorated share of salaries of professional staff training teachers, teachers being trained to implement new curriculum or instructional practices, teachers targeted for training and support to remedy performance weaknesses, mentor teachers, curriculum coaches and other who provide in-district professional development.
- Supplies and materials
- Contracted Services
- Dues and subscriptions
- Travel expenses for staff
- Tuition and/or conference fees

When examining the “Best in Class” (BIC) districts, our funding for professional development is significantly lower and is not a sustainable model moving forward. We compare against most up to date fiscal year state reported fiscal information. For the case of PD, the average 2014 per pupil expenditure (PPE) in BIC districts for professional development is \$178 (see Appendix B). We spend \$139 per pupil. Our student enrollment is 2573, so if we were to spend the average PPE - that would be an additional \$100,347 for the line items above.

When comparing the amount Groton-Dunstable spends against ourself, we spent \$172 per pupil on professional development in FY13 but only \$139 in FY14. According to the most up to date statewide comparison document (the FY13 Per Pupil Expenditures Report for the Professional Development Function), we spent \$172 per pupil on professional development (one of the highest amounts we spent in recent years) which was below the state average of \$225 per pupil.

Although our overall PD budget is reported to the state as just over \$359,000, most of those funds are earmarked to pay for salaries of staff for inservice days. We have two days before school begins and our full PD day on October 13. These three days cost the district a total of \$236,490, or \$78,830/per diem in Unit A salaries. In addition, \$75,000 is budgeted for tuition reimbursement for Unit A staff to take graduate courses. After paying for conference fees and travel expenses for PD, only \$36,800 general funds remain for the curriculum office to provide actual PD offerings.

These funds must cover professional development during in-service days, substitute release time, etc... This amount also must pay stipends for all district mentors, the mentor facilitator, summer curriculum work, ELL interpretation, and a portion of the salary (\$10,000) for one elementary literacy coach. This leaves no funds available to offer additional professional development to teachers. To increase the line item, the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Novak, has presented in other districts and donated the honorarium (in FY15, she donated a total of \$4,050) to Groton-Dunstable. This allowed the department to send the math coach and curriculum coordinator to Eureka training and the literacy coaches to trainings with Lucy Calkins for the Writing Units of Study, so they could return to the district to provide PD for the teachers. These funds also allowed the district to adopt a new math curriculum K-8 to ensure consistent language at those grade levels and instruction for all students aligned to the MA State Frameworks. Expecting Dr. Novak to continue to donate funds to offer professional development is unsustainable because this requires her to be out of the district instead of directly supporting our teachers.

We currently fund the stipends for multi-part series, inservice courses, and graduate courses through the Title IIA fund. Grants decline over time, so we need a plan to transfer the cost of these stipends, and the necessary sub coverage. Currently, we receive \$39,775 from Title IIA. In order to offer additional graduate courses through Fitchburg State (which pay \$1000/per credit), Dr. Novak offered 2 three credit courses this summer at no cost (\$6000 savings) so teachers would have additional PD opportunities. We cannot expect future instructors to offer this service free of charge. Districtwide spending on professional development is down \$12,703 in FY16 from FY10's and FY11's level, while the state has increased unfunded training requirements for things like a new educator evaluation system, new state standards, and new requirements to teach English Language Learners.

Spring 2015 PD Survey

We are making significant gains in PD satisfaction with our staff, but it will be difficult to sustain growth without increasing our funding, as previous discussions noted we do not have a sustainable model for professional development or instructional support spending.

The data below demonstrates PD results as they were in the spring of 2015. The baseline results came from the statewide TELL Mass results of Groton-Dunstable teachers. While the state discontinued this survey, the GD PD committee still administers the questions each spring. As demonstrated in the grid, the growth results were significant, especially for one year. However, the agreement percentages still defined areas for improvement. The lowest agreement percentages (31.5%) were for the item that read, "Professional development is evaluated and results are

communicated to teachers.” The spring 2015 results showed a marked improvement over the following year (+ 19.4%), but not where we want to be as a final outcome. We are therefore committed to evaluating ALL PD sessions and communicating results to participants because as a district, we still need to make growth in this area.

Fall 2015 PD Survey

Below is an analysis from the 2015 full day professional development day with staff (October 13, 2015). As mentioned above, a full survey will be administered in the spring but this formative assessment helps us check progress and adjust throughout the school year. For this survey, we had 112 respondents out of a total of 208 Unit A staff members. This sample size represents a 90% confidence level and a margin of error of 5%. The data was compiled, analyzed, and shared as an outgrowth of the professional development committee’s response to the spring’s results of staff not feeling as though results were analyzed and communicated back to them. The findings from the Fall 2015 PD survey were emailed to all staff on Tuesday, October 20, 2015.

Multi-Part Series Data Analysis

When asked to rate satisfaction with the multipart series, 111/112 staff members shared that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their session. That’s a 98.8% satisfaction rate. The development of the multi-part series allows teachers to choose offerings that are related to their content and instructional practices, and allows them to engage in the same series over three separate PD days over the course of a calendar year.



Figure 7: Multi-Part Series Satisfaction, Fall 2015

This is a reflection of our amazing colleagues who facilitated these sessions. Read some of the feedback below:

- Great session which ended with concrete ideas, directly usable in class.
- Fantastico!
- I can't wait for next session. We ACTUALLY talked about teaching and classroom behaviors!
- Great hands on approach
- I loved our topic and how the presenters related it to both staff members and students. It was meaningful both personally and professionally.
- Very helpful PD option and incredibly relevant to what we are passionate about. Great start to the PD series. Got us motivated and thinking and sharing.

Plenary Session Data Analysis

Last year, 62% of staff reported that the plenary session, which focused on suicide prevention training, was either relevant or very relevant. This year, after the MTSS presentation and the protocol that followed, this percentage increased to 85%. Using thematic coding, we examined the next prompt: *"In last year's PD survey, staff shared they wanted a shorter plenary session with an opportunity to break into smaller groups to reflect. Please comment on this year's plenary session and what we could do to improve next year."*

We received so much positive feedback about the changes we made to our plenary session.

- I felt it was very beneficial to break up into small groups during this session.
- Working in a small group allowed for a individual contributions and to focus on the students with whom we work.
- Wow, much better!
- I think this year's was presented well and got our attention and sustained our attention. Hopefully, we will attain the end goal where every child has the opportunity for advancement regardless of background.
- It is always refreshing to work with staff on relevant topics.

Two themes emerged that will help us to plan our plenary session next year. The first was that many staff members wished to know more about why were are exploring MTSS and what it will look like in Groton-Dunstable. For example, *“I appreciate the shorter session and appreciate being informed about MTSS. My only objection is that we hadn't heard about the MTSS protocol prior to the meeting....People weren't sure where this was coming from and what it would look like in the future.”* Another comment read, *“I think some staff needed to hear the why we are doing MTSS in order to buy-in...”*

- The purpose of the presentation was to give a brief overview to start the important conversations about MTSS in Groton-Dunstable. This will help us to create buy-in. Right now, we don't know what MTSS will look like in GD in the future. That's why we will create an MTSS Task Force to research MTSS and design a strategy customized for our district. This process will ensure that MTSS is not just another initiative - but a framework where all our stakeholders have “buy-in.” This will allow us to meet the needs of all our students.
- We are implementing the MTSS framework because we have a significant achievement gap between our special education students and our regular ed population. We also need to create more opportunities for our accelerated learners. Please review the [2014 Data Analysis](#) presentation for more information.
- As indicated in the superintendent's [Report of Entry Findings](#) and represented in the new [District Improvement Plan](#), the achievement gap between general education students and regular education students is of concern in our district. You may remember regular blog posts from Dr. Rodriguez about this last year or remember engaging in root cause analysis work. One of the identified areas

was a lack of tier 2 support personnel. Staff shared that positions cut (such as reading teachers), may have been a cause for the achievement gap growing for the past few years. The strategy committee and leadership team reviewed research on the topic and defined MTSS as a viable research-based approach to help address the needs of all learners. The following [crosswalk](#) was created to demonstrate this link and shared in September. It shows the problem statement of the achievement gap and includes the root causes you identified. It also shows the link between those and our efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for MTSS in Groton-Dunstable.

The second theme was that staff members wanted more direction and/or time for the MTSS protocol. For example, *“Personally I felt rushed, I didn’t know everyone in the room, and I would have liked to have a copy of the questions in front of me.”* We will be sure to distribute copies of all protocols before any future PD sessions and build an opportunity for everyone in a group to get to know each other before such an important collaboration.

Staffing Needs

The following staffing needs have been identified by a review of current district data (such as class size reports and academic achievement data), review of past staffing cuts and the implications of these cuts to our current programs, and analysis of ongoing district initiatives (such as the Multi-Tiered System of Support model), an analysis of best in class district comparisons, meetings and surveys sent to all teaching and administrative staff, and an analysis of research on the topics at hand.

We have developed a summary of all needs and then tiered these needs in priority levels. While they are all immediate needs, we were tasked with categorizing them into some levels of priority. We are not aligning these priorities into any one given school year or cycle. Rather, they are a way to categorize the needs.

Priority Level 1 is organized around direct instructional services in Tier I (instruction to all), Tier II (targeted small group instruction), and Tier III (individualized intervention). They include areas related to high class sizes, achievement gaps, and elementary level social/emotional support. Priority Area 2 is also prioritized based on direct services to students. It focuses primarily on direct services to students in non core subject areas, additional social/emotional supports, and nursing. Priority Level 3 is focused primarily on an updated elementary schedule, and non-direct service to students needs such as clerical supports, network technicians, curriculum stipends, maintenance, and custodians. Priority Level 4 are positions in response to past cuts, new requirements, or growing special education population needs. These positions support current needs, but may need to be expanded based on growing student populations or program reconfiguration.

This needs assessment is only the first step. Once reviewed publicly, the next step will be to explore potential outside funding sources. Then, we will review existing budget lines to see if re-allocation or additional savings can help fund some positions. Lastly, we will determine any potential impact this will have in future assessments to our towns.

Priority 1: Red, Priority 2: Yellow, Priority 3: Blue, Priority 4: Purple

Table 11: Staffing Additions

Boutwell	Swallow Union	Florence Roche	Middle School	High School	District
.4 Consulting Special Educator	1.0 Special Ed. Co-Teacher	1.0 Special Ed. Co-Teacher	1.0 Literacy Teacher/ Specialist	.333 Mandarin Teacher	1.0 Elementary Adjustment Counselor
	.5 Reading Specialist	1.0 Reading Specialist	.4 Mandarin Teacher	1.0 Math Teacher	1.0 Elementary Literacy Coordinator
	.4 Math Specialist	.6 Math Specialist	1.0 Math Teacher/ Specialist	1.0 ELA Teacher	.6 School Psychologist
	.2 Speech Language Pathologist	.4 Speech Language Pathologist	1.0 Library/ Media Specialist	1.0 Social Studies Teacher	1.0 Business Clerk
	.4 Tech.Integration Specialist	.5 Nursing Assistant	.5 Reading Specialist	1.0 Guidance Counselor	2.0 Network Technicians
	.5 Library/ Media Specialist	.6 Technology Integration Specialist	1.0 Special Ed. Co-Teacher	.67 Music Teacher	K-12 PBH Coordinator Stipend
	1.0 Specialist Area Teacher	1.0 Library/ Media Specialist	.33 Music Teacher	.67 Art Teacher	K-12 Fine Arts Coordinator Stipend
	.5 Kindergarten Assistant	1.5 Specialist Area Teacher	Increase MSS Admin. Assistant to 261 Days	.333 Theater Teacher	1-12 Foreign Language Coordinator Stipend
		1.0 Kindergarten Assistant	.5 Records Secretary	.166 Videography Teacher	1.0 Maintenance
				1.0 Content Area Coordinator Coverage	2.0 Custodians
				.7 Registered Nurse	.5 ELL Teacher
				.5 Athletic Dept. Secretary	12.0 Lunch Aids

Staffing Needs Summary

Priority Level 1

Priority Level 1 is organized around direct instructional services in Tier I (instruction to all), Tier II (targeted small group instruction), and Tier III (individualized intervention).

They include areas related to high class sizes, achievement gaps, and elementary level social/emotional support.

- In order to close the achievement gap in the elementary and middle schools, we are requesting 3.0 co-teaching positions. This will allow co-teaching models to be in all three schools.
- 1.0 FTE for K-4 Literacy Coordinator whose responsibility it will be to develop, align and implement literacy curriculum across the district to address the gap in literacy scores against other major subject areas and provide coaching to staff. This will allow the existing 2.0 reading specialists to no longer have to take a coaching role so they can provide direct service delivery to students in Tiers II and III. Based on recommendations from principals, student data, and current programming, an additional 1.0 reading specialist will be hired to replace the current reading tutor at FR (at minimal cost to the district) and the Swallow Union .4 reading tutor position will transition to a .5 reading specialist. Thus, Florence Roche will have 2.0 Reading Specialists and Swallow Union will have 1.5 Reading Specialists.
- 1.0 Math specialist at the elementary schools to provide direct services to students who have enrichment or acceleration support needs (Tier II needs). The

intent is to help close the achievement gap and support those students who are accelerated far beyond grade level.

- 3.73 FTE teachers/specialists at the MS. This will allow for much needed intervention and acceleration support (Tier II) support the co-teaching model at the middle school, help refine the MS schedule additional time, reduce class sizes in specialist blocks, and allow for new specialist classes at the middle school along with a new language option (Mandarin) at the 7th and 8th grade level.
- Increase of .5 Reading Specialist at the middle school level to provide direct service to students (Tiers II and III) to close the achievement gap.
- 3.333 FTE teachers at the HS. This will reduce class sizes in Math, ELA, and SS classes, and offer an additional language at the HS.
- 1.0 Adjustment Counselor to provide direct instruction to elementary level students to address the increasing amount of students who have social and emotional needs and come more in line with state ratios for guidance support.

Priority Level 2

Priority Area 2 is also prioritized based on direct services to students. It focuses primarily on direct services to students in non core subject areas, additional social/emotional supports, and nursing.

- .6 FTE to provide assessment support and meeting support for speech and language students. This allows the existing Speech and Language Pathologists (SL)s to provide more direct Tier III instruction. The numbers are increasing based on in-district special education program development.

- In order to address the social emotional needs of students and align with recommended guidelines, we need to add a .6 FTE School Psychologist. In addition, a 1.0 Guidance Counselor at the HS is needed to meet the MASCA recommendations, offer a Freshman support and orientation program to enhance transition to the HS, and allow other counselors to focus more on matriculation efforts.
- To replace past cuts in our fine arts department, to increase fine and performing arts opportunities for students and to reduce class sizes in certain offerings, we would need a .67 Music Teacher, .67 Art Teacher, .333 Theater Teacher, and a .166 Videography Teacher at the high school.
- In order to meet the needs of nurse visits and state recommended levels, we will need an additional .5 Nursing Assistant at FR and a .7 Registered Nurse at the HS.
- At the HS, we will add an additional 1.0 of 3 partial FTE's to cover core academic classes in departments who were not part of the distributed leadership pilot. This will allow all of our content area coordinators one period off each, to help monitor their departments and to support the educator evaluation framework (if bargained to do so).

Priority Level 3

Priority Level 3 is focused primarily on an updated elementary schedule, and non-direct service to students needs such as clerical supports, network technicians, curriculum stipends, maintenance, and custodians.

- In order to revise the elementary schedule to offer enhanced programs, and restore cuts to previous department staff, we would need 2.5 Additional Elementary Specialists, a 1.0 Technology Integration Specialist, and a 1.5 Library Media Specialist at the Elementary level.
- In order to provide essential functions, we need to restore the Middle School South administrative assistant role to a full year (261 days) and restore the records secretary role (.375 FTE) at the middle school that was previously cut. In addition, in order to account for the actual hours work to support the growing athletic program in our district, the district needs to add a .5 Athletic Department Secretary.
- In order to provide programmatic alignment, we will need to restore the stipends for a K-12 Physical/Behavioral Health (PBH) Coordinator, K-12 Fine Arts Coordinator, and a 1-12 Foreign Language Coordinator.
- In order to restore the Business office position that was cut, we need to add a 1.0 Business clerk. This clerk position will have many functions but one of their primary functions will be to oversee the benefits management to ensure that appropriate monitoring and compliance occurs.
- 2.0 Network Technicians. One of these positions replaces one recently cut network staffer who moved to a data specialist role and whose position was not replaced. These positions are necessary to maintain all of the new infrastructure, hardware, and software that is needed in a 21st century learning environment.
- In order to properly maintain our buildings and grounds, we need to restore the 1.0 Maintenance and 2.0 Custodians that were reduced in past budget cuts.

Priority Level 4

Priority Level 4 are positions in response to past cuts, new requirements, or growing special education population needs. These positions support current needs, but may need to be expanded based on growing student populations or program reconfiguration. These areas include

- Kindergarten assistants
- Boutwell special education consulting/coaching
- Additional English Language Learner support
- Lunch aides

Staffing Needs Rationale

Priority Level I

3.0 FTE for co-teachers

This will allow a framework for co-teaching model at both elementary schools and expand the middle school model. The intention is to provide embedded direct services to students in Tier III. Of note, This will only cost the district 2.5 FTE , as the budget currently assumes the cost of a fellow in that position this year.

Challenge

Groton-Dunstable District's 2014 PPI for students with disabilities is below the state average and at a 5-year low. This is the most recent state data available. Groton-Dunstable is currently a Level 2 district. The highest level is Level 1. In a recent SC workshop, in relationship to recent Best in Class (BIC) Districts, we have identified that Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) are below the BIC average for the middle school,

particularly for ELA. For students with disabilities, Pupil Performance Index (PPI) is nearly 40% below BIC average.

As illustrated in the 2015 sample PARCC data below of all grade 3 students, 76% of students with disabilities scored less than proficient. The increased rigor of the new standards and assessment defines the ever growing need for our students with disabilities to have research based models of instruction.

Table 12: PARCC results for students with disabilities

	Number of Students Enrolled	Part. Rate	Number of Students Included	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	Distribution				
									L5	L4	L3	L2	L1
Students w/ Disabilities	37	95%	34	--	24%	32%	29%	15%					

Response

In an article, titled, Purposeful Assessment Practices for Co-Teachers, Conderman & Hedin (2012) define co-teaching as follows:

“Friend and Cook (2010) defined coteaching as "a service delivery option for providing special education or related services to students with disabilities or other special needs . . . in their general education classes" (p. 109). In co-taught classes, students with disabilities receive instruction from highly qualified teachers, interact with a rigorous curriculum, and receive necessary individualized supports and interventions as noted in their IEPs (Conderman & Hedin, 2010). Co-teaching occurs as two professionals share responsibilities for all students within a common space and has three components: co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing (Conderman, Bresnahan, & Pedersen, 2009; Conderman & Hedin 2010; Dieker & toward general education standards. Each

co-teaching model allows teachers to collaborate by differentiating instruction and assessments.”

According to a study of co-teaching (Walther-Thomas, 1997), there are the following benefits for those who participate in a co-taught classroom in including:

- Four major benefits identified for students with disabilities: positive feelings about themselves as capable learners, enhanced academic performance, improved social skills, and stronger peer relationships.
- Five major benefits identified for most students in the co-taught classrooms: improved academic performance, more time with and attention from the teacher, increased emphasis on cognitive strategies and study skills, increased emphasis on social skills, and improved classroom communities.
- Benefits for general and special education teachers that were reported by both teacher participants and administrator participants included increased professional satisfaction, opportunities for professional growth, personal support, and increased opportunities for collaboration.

In order to close the achievement gap in the elementary and middle schools, we are requesting 3.0 co-teaching positions. This will allow co-teaching models to be in all three schools.

1.0 FTE for K-4 Literacy Coordinator

1.0 FTE for K-4 Literacy Coordinator whose responsibility it will be to develop, align and implement literacy curriculum across the district to address the gap in literacy scores against other major subject areas and provide coaching to staff. This will allow the existing 2.0 reading specialists to no longer have to take a coaching role so they can

provide direct service delivery to students in Tiers II and III. Based on recommendations from principals, student data, and current programming, an additional 1.0 reading specialist will be hired to replace the current reading tutor at FR (at minimal cost to the district) and the Swallow Union .4 reading tutor position will transition to a .5 reading specialist. Thus, Florence Roche will have 2.0 Reading Specialists and Swallow Union will have 1.5 Reading Specialists.

Challenge

As defined by a summary of past district cuts, from FY2009 through FY2013, the District cut 2.5 reading teachers. For the current population of 285 students, SU has a 1.0 Reading Coach who works with teachers and assists with administering the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as well as provide part time reading intervention and one .4 Reading Tutor who is only available to assist children in K, 1, and 2. For the current population of 541 students, FR has only one (1) Reading Coach, who works with teachers and assists with administering the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and one (1) Tutor who assists with reading recovery.

You can see below a summary of Fountas and Pinnell data from Florence Roche. Fountas and Pinnell is a test that assesses reading comprehension. As you can see, there are a number of students who are reading below benchmark but are not identified as special education students. This is used as an example of the need for Tier II literacy support. Before the cuts to staffing, as identified above, those students benefited from more comprehensive reading teacher services.

Table 13: 14-15 Fountas and Pinnel data

Grade Level	Total #Students	#Students Below Benchmark	% Students Below Benchmark	# Students at Benchmark	%Students at Benchmark	#Students above Benchmark	%Students above Benchmark	#Students at or above Benchmark	% Students at or above Benchmark
K	87	19 6 SPED	22% SPED 7%	6	7%	62	71%	68	78%
1	94	9 4 SPED	10% SPED 4%	8	9%	77	82%	85	90%
2	105	9 7 SPED	9% SPED 7%	26	25%	70	67%	96	91%
3	135	12 10 SPED	9% SPED 7%	18	13%	105	78%	123	91%
4	119	11 7 SPED	10% SPED 6%	20	17%	88	74%	108	91%

In the yellow below benchmark columns, the totals are indicated on the top line. The number and percent of SPED students that are part of the total are indicated below each total (rounded to the nearest %).

Our 2014 data allows highlights this area of need for literacy support. When examining the 2014 data, you can see that our median student growth percentile (SGP) in ELA is 49 but our median in math is 65. In looking at elementary MCAS scores over the past five years, we have had historic declines in ELA. As you can see from the tables below, the most recent MCAS scores (2014), which offer our most able comparability to past year's, show higher needs improvement/warning ratings than previous years.

Table 14: Elementary MCAS trends

GRADE 04 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL					GRADE 03 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL				
	2011	2012	2013	2014		2011	2012	2013	2014
ADVANCED	12	23	20	24	ADVANCED	12	27	16	17
PROFICIENT	59	54	55	49	PROFICIENT	66	54	59	57
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	23	19	20	25	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	21	15	23	22
WARNING	5	4	5	3	WARNING	1	4	3	4

In relationship to recently released PARCC data, a new state assessment, the students transitional CPI scores (Composite Performance Index-see glossary) are lower than the MCAS CPI scores from past years. For example, in grade 3 ELA, the current mean CPI is 87.8. The 2014 CPI was 90.4. In a [press release](#) dated September 21, 2015, it noted that, “ The preliminary PARCC results showed that in most grades, students who took PARCC math and English language tests on a computer were less likely to score in the ‘meeting expectations’ range than MCAS students were to score Proficient or above. In other words, student achievement on PARCC for those who took the test on a computer appears to have been lower than for students who took MCAS. ” If this is the new expectation, we have ever more work to do to prepare our students for this new standard.

Table 15: Elementary 2015 PARCC data

Grade and Subject	Level 4 and 5 %		Level 5 %		Level 4 %		Level 3 %		Level 2 %		Level 1 %		Avg Scaled Score	Number of Students Included	Trans. CPI		Trans. Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	
	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE			#	Mean	#	Median
GRADE 3 ELA/L	64	54	4	7	60	47	21	22	10	14	5	10	759	190	191	87.8	--	--
GRADE 3 Math	65	55	9	12	55	43	22	25	12	14	2	6	758	190	191	91.2	--	--
GRADE 4 ELA/L	77	57	26	15	50	42	18	25	4	12	2	5	770	179	182	88.7	174	54.0
GRADE 4 Math	73	48	9	6	64	41	20	29	6	18	1	5	764	181	184	90.2	176	51.0

Table 16: Elementary 2014 MCAS scores

Grade and Subject	Proficient or Higher		Advanced		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Included	CPI	SGP	Included in SGP
	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE				
GRADE 03 - READING	74	57	17	12	57	46	22	33	4	10	178	90.4	N/A	N/A
GRADE 03 - MATHEMATICS	85	68	53	31	33	38	8	21	6	11	179	93.2	N/A	N/A
GRADE 04 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	73	54	24	13	49	41	25	33	3	13	199	90.6	60.5	190
GRADE 04 - MATHEMATICS	79	52	38	20	41	32	17	36	4	12	198	92.8	80.5	190

Response

It is important to distribute our curriculum leadership to support our ELA teachers as they design and deliver standards-based, universally-designed instruction. When teachers are provided with ongoing, intensive curriculum support, they have a greater sense of efficacy in their ability to meet the needs of students, increased student outcomes, and greater job satisfaction (Angelle, 2010). This support will also help them deliver instruction to students of varying ability in a tiered instruction model.

In their article, “Reading Specialist: Key to a Systematic Schoolwide Reading Model”, Helf and Cooke (2011) described the components of a tiered model.

- “Tier 1 (i.e., core reading instruction) is instruction for all students in Kindergarten through third grade. Core classroom instruction that emphasizes the five critical components (National Reading Panel, 2000) of beginning reading is provided 90 min per day in the general education classroom. A core reading program is the primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards (Simmons & Kame’enui, 2003)”
- “Tier 2 support is for approximately 20 to 30% of students who have not made adequate progress in Tier 1 (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 2004). These students receive supplemental instruction

that is systematic, explicit, and targets the specific skills and strategies in which the students are not making adequate progress. Supplemental instruction is provided in small group arrangements and lasts approximately 30 min per day. This instruction is in addition to the 90 min of core reading instruction provided in Tier 1. Students in Tier 2 receive progress monitoring assessments every 2 weeks or at least twice a month on targeted skills and strategies to guide instructional decisions.”

- “Tier 3 (i.e., intensive intervention) is for approximately 5–10% of students who have extreme reading difficulties or reading disabilities and have not responded to Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 2004).”

Research has defined the need for strong curriculum coordination and leadership. One of the essential functions of the curriculum coordinator will be to assist in coaching staff. Helf and Cooke (2011) describe the coaching model, “...Coaching involves having the expert...provide individualized support after the initial training. The purpose of coaching is to support the challenge of moving what was learned in in-service or workshops to the context of the teacher’s classroom. Coaching is one way of encouraging this translation without losing program integrity. This support can be done through observation and feedback (Joyce & Showers, 1996) or through a combination of observation, feedback and side-by-side coaching.”

By having a full time K-5 reading coordinator (who does curriculum alignment and coaching), we will be able to allow the 2.0 reading specialists to go back to providing full time intervention support to the students. In addition, the existing Florence

Roche tutor will be moved to a 1.0 reading specialist position and the Swallow Union .4 reading tutor will be transitioned to a .5 reading specialist. The district will have a dedicated coordinator for literacy support and offer the level of reading support provided prior to the cuts. The K-4 ELA coordinator will work in concert with the existing 5-8 Content Coordinator (full time teacher with stipend), the newly organized middle school assistant principal for curriculum, and the HS ELA Content Area Coordinator.

1.0 math specialist at the elementary schools

This position will provide direct services to students who have enrichment or acceleration support needs (Tier II needs).

Challenge

There are a number of students who are not on IEP's who are below grade level in math skills. As this district has no Tier II math support, they receive no intervention services. As an illustrative sample, I have included the 2015 PARCC data below for the Florence Roche School. In this one school alone, 37 students in grade 3 and 18 students in grade 4 who are not on IEP's were below the new state threshold for proficiency.

Table 17: Overview of 2015 PARCC data

<p><u>Grade 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 1: 1 ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 2: 10 ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 3: 27 (4/27 received a Trans. CPI score of 75)
<p><u>Grade 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 1: 0 ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 2: 0 ● Students not on an IEP who received a Level 3: 18 (2/18 received a Trans. CPI score of 50)

In addition, we have no person to support math enrichment efforts for above grade level students. There is no systematic approach to support students who are grade levels above in mathematics at the elementary level.

Response

In a study by Richards and Omdal (2007), there was a “significant difference between the scores of low background knowledge learners who received tiered instruction and low background learners who did not receive tiered instruction, indicating that tiered instruction is especially beneficial for learners in the margins.”

Supported by research on its effectiveness, the district would hire a 1.0 Math specialist at the elementary schools to provide direct services to students who have enrichment or acceleration support needs (Tier II needs). Most likely, they will be at Florence Roche for 3 days a week and Swallow Union twice a week. The schools will use existing data sets to determine need and caseloads. The schools will be exploring future scheduling models. For now, the intervention time will be built into the existing school schedule (similar to the reading tutor model).

3.73 FTE teachers/specialists at the MS

This will reduce class sizes in specialist blocks, allow for much needed intervention and acceleration support (Tier II) support the co-teaching model at the middle school, help refine the MS schedule additional time, and allow for new specialist classes at the middle school along with a new language option (Mandarin) at the 7th and 8th grade level.

Challenge

As defined in a previous staff cut history document, Integrated Arts staff at the middle schools have been steadily been cut since FY2008-2009. Past class size calculations were done by taking total staff and averaging it against students. The problem with that model is that it assumes equal distribution of classes which is not possible in a real scenario. Students may have scheduling conflicts that won't allow even distribution (such as how many choose to take band and what class that session runs against).

Thus, to define the impact of these cuts in our current classes, we ran an over 25 student audit of our student management database at the end of September 2015. Specifically, we ran a program to see how many classes had more than 25 students in them. In the middle school, 11 core classes and 33 Integrated Arts classes currently have over 25 students in them (class sizes range from 26-33 students).

Table 18: Middle school classes with over 25 students

Course	Students	Course	Students
French 7	28	Art 5	28
French 8	30	Art 5	30
French 8	27	Band 7	30
Language Arts 6	26	Band 8	28
PreAlgebra 1	26	Chorus 6	26
PreAlgebra 1	28	Chorus 6	28
Science 6	26	Chorus 7	35
Science 6	27	Chorus 7	30
Science 6	27	Chorus 8	36
Social Studies 6	27	Chorus 8	36
Spanish 7	26	Chorus/Music	32

Visual Arts 7	29	Chorus/Music	30
Music 6	28	Chorus/Music	31
Music 7	30	Chorus/Music	33
Music 7	29	Communication/ Drama 6	27
Music 7	26	Communication/Drama 7	29
PE/Wellness 5	30	Drama	27
PE/Wellness 5	28	Drama	26
PE/Wellness 6	26	Drama	29
PE/Wellness 6	33	Fine Arts 8	31
PE/Wellness 7	30	Fine Arts 8	29
PE/Wellness 7	32	Visual Arts 6	29

As described in a past staffing history document, at the end of FY2009, the position of Librarian was cut at both North and South Middle School Libraries. In FY2010, they replaced the certified librarians with two (2) FTE para-educators. Para-educators, however, are not certified teachers, do not have a degree in library science, and cannot instruct a class or attend professional development classes/seminars. In FY2011, the library staff was further reduced to one (1) FTE para-educator. This reduction resulted in only one library being open at a time. Therefore, North and South libraries are currently open every other day. Also this this staffing history document, it was noted that prior to FY2000, the district offered a Shop/Engineering/Technology class at the MS. This class was ultimately eliminated due to budget cuts. Many of the comparable school districts around us offer Technology Education. The existing science standards are quite dense and both grades 5 and grade 8 take the science MCAS. In addition, the science standards are being revised and we will need to address the expectations of these new state documents.

Performance at the middle school in ELA and Math have led to the designation of the school as Level 2. This is the only school in the district designated as Level 2. All others are the highest level, Level 1. As you can see below, some student performance is decreasing on the new PARCC not only in relationship to ourselves but to state averages. In grade 5 ELA, students were scoring 17 percentage points higher than the state on the MCAS, but only 5 percentage points higher than the state on the PARCC for the same grade and subject areas. This is also demonstrated in math where in 2014, grade 5 students scored 19 percentage points higher than the state but in 2015 on the PARCC, they only scored 4 percentage points higher. This reflects the adaptation to the online platform but also what the state tests assess. The PARCC assessment tests students on the new standards but the previous curriculum was not well aligned to them. The district recognized that we were not well aligned with the new MA frameworks and began purchasing aligned curriculum this fall (in grades K-8).

Table 19: 2014 Middle school MCAS results

Grade and Subject	Proficient or Higher		Advanced		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Included	CPI	SGP	Included in SGP
	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE				
GRADE 05 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	81	64	26	18	55	46	15	26	4	10	204	92.8	43.0	192
GRADE 05 - MATHEMATICS	80	61	45	30	35	30	17	24	3	15	203	92.1	48.0	192
GRADE 05 - SCIENCE AND TECH/ENG	82	53	50	20	32	33	16	34	2	13	203	93.3	N/A	N/A
GRADE 06 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	81	68	16	16	66	52	15	23	3	9	215	92.1	36.0	202
GRADE 06 - MATHEMATICS	79	60	50	29	29	31	17	25	4	15	212	91.0	63.0	201
GRADE 07 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	88	72	16	11	72	61	9	21	3	7	223	95.6	55.5	208
GRADE 07 - MATHEMATICS	75	50	35	17	41	33	18	26	6	24	223	88.8	76.0	209
GRADE 08 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	85	79	13	14	72	65	11	14	3	8	231	93.3	45.0	217
GRADE 08 - MATHEMATICS	71	52	33	19	38	33	19	29	10	19	229	85.5	54.0	219
GRADE 08 - SCIENCE AND TECH/ENG	64	42	9	4	55	38	31	41	5	18	228	86.3	N/A	N/A

Table 20: 2015 Middle school PARCC results

Grade and Subject	Level 4 and 5 %		Level 5 %		Level 4 %		Level 3 %		Level 2 %		Level 1 %		Avg Scaled Score	Number of Students Included	Trans. CPI		Trans. Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	
	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE	DIST	STATE			#	Mean	#	Median
GRADE 5 Math	78	70	9	8	57	71	25	25	9	15	1	5	757	191	197	90.2	190	38.0
GRADE 5 ELA/L	68	63	9	8	59	55	23	23	5	10	4	4	762	192	195	90.1	190	38.0
GRADE 5 Math	59	55	12	11	47	44	30	26	11	15	1	5	757	192	194	87.6	190	44.0
GRADE 6 ELA/L	69	60	11	12	59	48	24	25	7	11	1	4	760	200	201	91.8	193	33.0
GRADE 6 Math	76	53	14	10	62	44	20	28	4	14	1	5	765	197	198	94.8	190	56.0
GRADE 7 ELA/L	81	61	42	21	40	40	11	22	7	11	1	6	773	197	199	94.5	195	61.0
GRADE 7 Math	77	45	24	8	53	37	19	32	4	18	1	4	768	199	201	91.2	197	76.0
GRADE 8 ELA/L	78	64	20	16	59	48	17	20	5	10	0	5	771	210	214	98.4	205	51.0
GRADE 8 Math	63	53	2	10	62	43	22	22	12	15	3	10	756	112	116	86.9	110	61.0
GRADE 8 ALG. I	100	80	46	14	54	66	0	15	0	4	0	1	803	104	104	100.0	101	87.0

Response

In a study showcased in *Teacher Librarian*, Beard and Antrim (2010), share the results of a study that shows “when below-grade-level readers are given the advantage of teacher-librarian assistance in choosing books that match their reading level and their interests, they will be more successful in their reading achievement. When books match the student's needs and interests, as well as their reading level, they will likely read more and develop their reading skills in areas such as reading engagement and comprehension (Beard & Antrim, 2010).”

A study by Wernersbach, Crowley, & Rosenthal (2014) found that students enrolled in study skills courses had lower initial levels of academic self-efficacy and demonstrated greater increases than comparison students, reaching equivalent levels or surpassing the comparison students at posttest.

In a study of Tier 2 literacy supports in sixth graders, Graves, Brandon, Duesbery, McIntosh, and Pyle, (2011) noted “ a significant statistical difference between treatment and control on oral reading fluency for students who received the Tier 2 Intervention. Students in this group gained an average of 10 wpm (words per minute) in 10 weeks. This is encouraging given the consistent findings in recent meta-analyses and throughout the years of success in oral reading fluency as a predictor of reading comprehension (Kim, Petscher, Schatschneider, & Foorman, 2010; Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2005), and concerns that researchers have noted about the difficulty of increasing fluency as the student grows older (Torgesen et al., 2001).”

When running a mock schedule of students to teachers, the science classes will be able to be managed by smaller overall class numbers with existing staff. By hiring a 1.0 library/media specialist, the middle school libraries will no longer be closed for half

the week in each building, can enhance students research and reading skills, and this hire will provide a study/research skills class. The new 1.0 literacy/writing specialist will provide direct Tier II intervention as well as offer a writing course. The 1.0 math teacher will teach an accelerated math class, pre-Algebra class, provide math intervention, and cover an existing math section, thus allowing an existing staff member to teach a new technology/engineering class, while helping reduce the class sizes in our math classes. The addition of a Mandarin option (.4 teacher) for languages will reduce class sizes in other world language sections, and introduce a new language option for students.

.5 Reading Specialist at the middle school level

We need an increase of .5 to our reading specialist position at the middle school. This will provide direct service to students (Tiers II and III) to close the achievement gap.

Challenge

5 year MCAS data analysis demonstrates that students perform lower in ELA as compared to the state than in math. Likewise, when examining the PARCC scores at the middle school (5-8), we see a significant need for additional support in ELA.

In grade 5, when examining the MCAS scores in the spring of 2014, 81% of our students scored proficient or advanced (P/A) on the ELA test, which was 17 percentage points above the state average. When we transitioned to the PARCC, the state average dropped from a 64% P/A rate to 63%. Groton-Dunstable, however, fell 17 percentage points to 68%. This decrease was even more pronounced when examining the data for our students with disabilities. On the 2014 MCAS, we performed 15 percentage points above the state average, but we fell 3% below the state average on the 2015 PARCC

which is a drop of 18 percentile points. The drops in grade 5 ELA are the most significant decreases we see in any grade/subject area in the district.

In grade 6, we dropped from 82% P/A to 70% (a 12% decrease) while the state only decreased 8 percentile points. Our students with disabilities fell from 25% P/A in ELA to 19%, yet they increased from 19% to 42% in math (27 percentile points above the state average). This significant increase shows the potential of our students to make gains so we need to provide additional support to our teachers so they can align our ELA curriculum and instruction to MA State Frameworks.

In grade 7 ELA, the gap between all students and students with disabilities continues to increase. When examining the 2015 PARCC data for all students, our performance increased from 16 percentile points above the state average to 21; when examining the data for students with disabilities, however, we fell from 9 percentile points above the state average to only 1. We see a similar trend in grade 8, where our overall performance increased, relative to the state by 5 percentile points, but our students with disabilities fell by 8. This is alarming, as we have improved our outcomes for all students in grade 7/8, but the gap between all students and students with disabilities has continued to increase. We need additional support so our teachers can meet the needs of this cohort.

The transition from the MCAS to the PARCC, which requires close reading, text-based response, and deeper reading comprehension, highlights the need for additional curriculum support in both reading and writing at the middle school level in ELA.

Response

Helf and Cooke (2011) define the benefits of reading specialists, through a review of relevant literature. They contend, “With the current focus on early reading interventions, the role of the reading specialist in improving school-wide efforts for prevention and intervention of reading risk has received increased emphasis (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). To make progress in improving students’ reading achievement, it is of critical importance to have a highly trained reading specialist within the school to support teachers and schools in making needed changes (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Dole, 2004; Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Tatum, 2004).”

As defined by Friedman (2010), “An important feature of Tier II instruction is for a school to develop an intervention team—a group with good capacity or potential capacity to conduct diagnostic-prescriptive work with students who did not respond to the foundational classroom program in Tier I.”

Reading specialist services would be increased to include a .5 additional reading specialist. This will allow for a grades 5-6 to have a dedicated 1.0 reading specialist and a grades 7-8 to have a dedicated 1.0 reading specialist (who can provide tier II or tier III support).

3.333 FTE teachers at the HS

This will reduce class sizes in Math, ELA, and SS classes, and offer an additional language at the HS.

Challenge

As defined in a previous staff cut history document, in FY 2011, one (1) Social Studies teacher was cut. This has led to increased class size in many history classes.

As defined in our open and community forum documents, community stakeholders mentioned that the loss of a HS civics course has also been felt by the community. The loss of this position resulted in six (6) fewer sections, increasing class sizes in this subject area. In addition, Mass Core graduation requirements require four years of math and 4 years of ELA. All three subject areas represent core subjects necessary for success in college and career. In the past, class size calculations were done by taking total staff and averaging it against students. The problem with that model is that it assumes equal distribution of classes which is not possible in a real scenario. Students may have scheduling conflicts that won't allow even distribution (such as how many choose to take band and what class that session runs against). Thus, to define the impact of these cuts in our current classes, we ran an over 25 student audit of our student management database at the end of September 2015. Specifically, we ran a program to see how many classes had more than 25 students in them.

For several years we have had to cut core area electives as well. For example, in the ELA department, this year, we had enough sign-ups to run Science Fiction but did not run them due to staffing. We had to cut our Film Studies class to a quarter class due to staffing and had enough desire but not enough staff to run an additional creative writing course. In addition to cutting individual courses we have cut multiple sections, across all content areas that we have had to reduce/cut due to lack of staffing. For example student course requests for Student in the Law, Sociology and other courses has been greater than we could staff.

At the high school, there are currently 28 core classes and 9 classes in the areas of PE/Health/Art/Chorus/Transitions (college prep including college essay writing) have class sizes over 25 (class sizes range from 26-34 students).

Table 21: High school classes with over 25 students (Sept. 2015)

Course	Students	Course	Students
English 9	30	Algebra IA	29
English 9	27	Algebra IB	26
English 9	28	Geometry	30
English 10	27	Geometry	30
English 11	27	Algebra II	27
English 12	30	Algebra II	30
English 12	30	PreCalculus	30
English 12	31	Introduction to Statistics	29
Writing and Grammar	26	Biology II	26
US History I	27	Molecular Bio	29
US History II	28	Psychology	31
US History II	26	Marketing / Entrepreneurship	29
US History II	33	Sociology	29
Latin I	30	Transitions I	29
Spanish III Honors	26	Transitions I	30
		Transitions I	33

When we conducted an analysis of our SAT scores against Best In Class Districts, we found that we were the lowest for reading, the lowest for writing, and the third lowest for math.

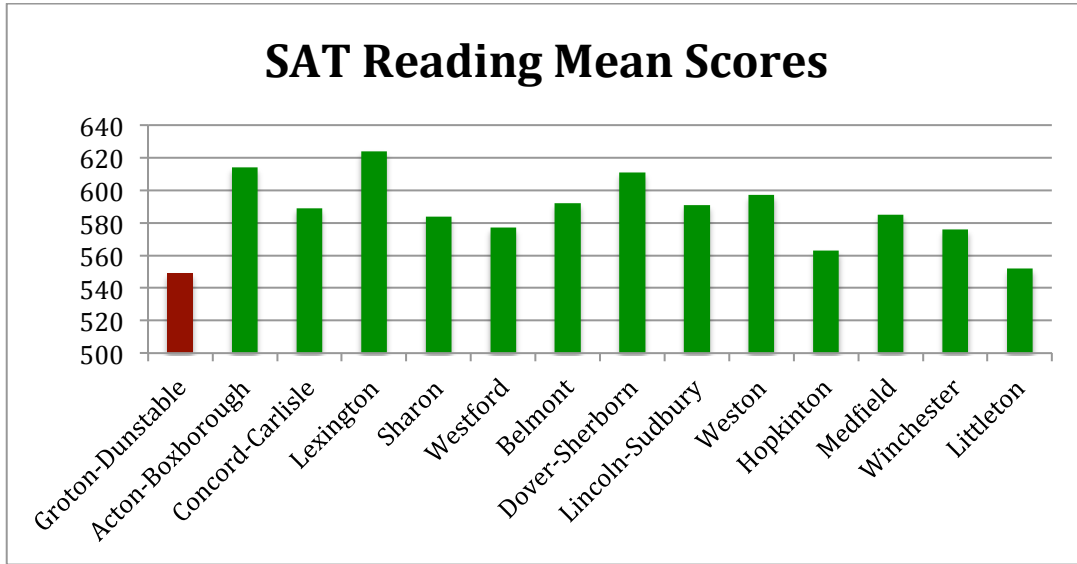


Figure 8: SAT reading Best in Class vs. GD

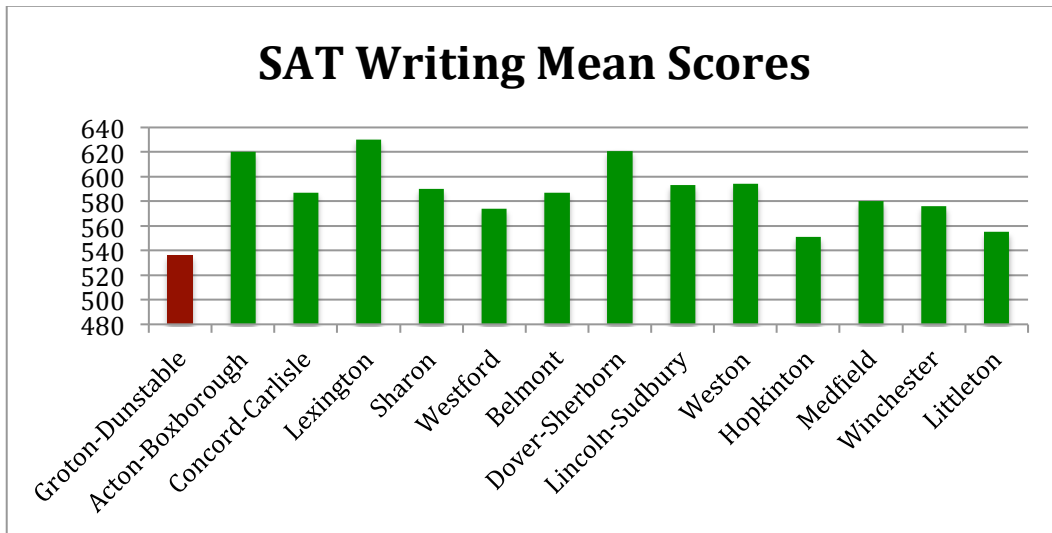


Figure 9: SAT Writing Best in Class vs. GD

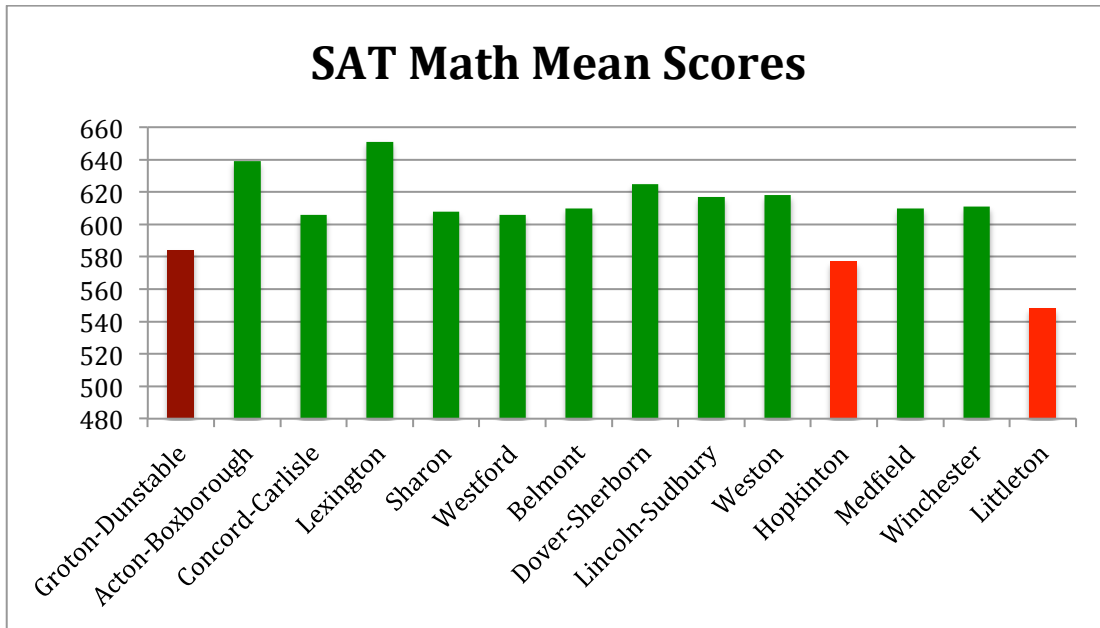


Figure 10: SAT Math Best in Class vs. GD

Response

In a study that highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment it read “We were able to demonstrate a strong, positive and significant correlation (.49) between the content of instruction and student achievement gains. When we controlled for prior achievement, students’ poverty level, and content of instruction, practically all variation in student learning was explained. Thus, instruction (taught curriculum) when aligned to standards (written curriculum) was linked to significantly increased student achievement” (Squires, 2012).

To address large class size and offer additional curriculum support, we recommend an additional 1.0 ELA, 1.0 math teacher, and 1.0 social studies teacher. Based on a proposed pilot, we will take .666 from this 3.0 and apply it to Academic Advisor coverage to allow the defined department the coverage so they can conduct observations. This one block will also free them to fulfill coordinator responsibilities

including curriculum alignment to the new MA Frameworks and support of instructional practice.

1.0 Adjustment Counselor

The counselor will provide direct instruction to elementary level students to support the increasing number of students who exhibit social and emotional needs, and align with state ratios for guidance support.

Challenge

The number of students requiring social and emotional support is growing. While there are no mandates in Massachusetts for school counselor ratios, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011 publication) says MA average for student to counselor ratio is 432: 1. The current US average was 457:1. There are a number of states that mandate a counselor to student ratio. States like Arkansas, Georgia have a mandated 1:450 ratio. Currently, our ratio at Florence Roche is 1:540. In addition to being above national averages, the American School Counselor Association recommends a school-counselor-to student ratio of 1:250.

Based on an analysis of Best In Class Districts, as illustrated in the table below, Groton-Dunstable has the lowest per pupil expenditure amount than every other district. The source for this chart (that was completed in August of 2015 was the Finance/Staff Report from the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Groton-Dunstable counselor expenditure per pupil is \$185. Lincoln-Sudbury has the highest PPE at \$894. The average PPE for the group (excluding G-D) is \$508 per pupil which is \$323 per pupil more than Groton-Dunstable.

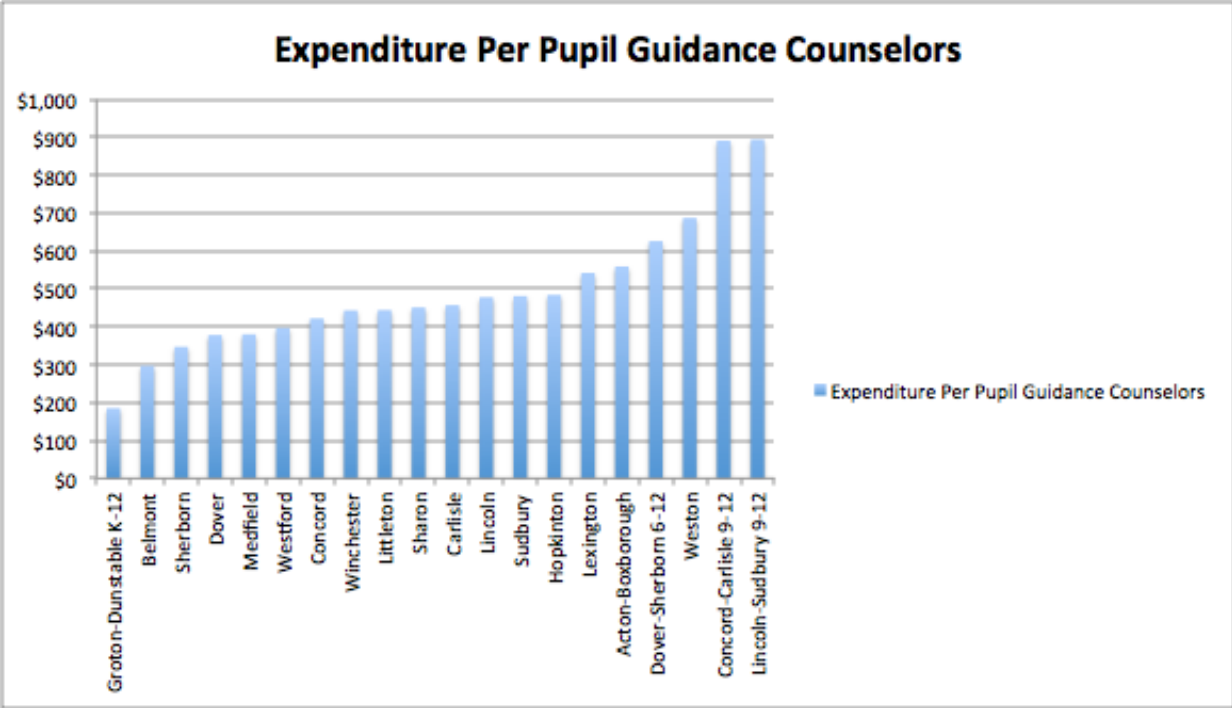


Figure 11: Expenditure per pupil guidance counselors

Response

Research has shown that when exposed to a consistent social-emotional curriculum from kindergarten, researchers saw significant increases in student knowledge about emotion situations and significant decreases in student internalizing behaviors (Whitcomb & Merrell, 2012)

The recommendation is for a 1.0 adjustment counselor to be split between the two elementary schools, as defined by student need. The rationale for an adjustment counselor is to hire someone with specialized knowledge in social and emotional development. This person can provide outreach to parents as well as offer a more specialized approach to supporting wraparound services. In addition, by supporting students directly, the ratio of counselor to student is more aligned with expected standards.

Priority Level 2

.6 FTE speech and language

This will provide assessment support and meeting support for speech and language students. This allows the existing speech and language pathologists (SLPs) to provide more direct Tier III instruction and to have someone to help with testing and to provide Tier I push-in support in the classroom. The numbers are increasing based on in-district special education program development.

Challenge

Speech and Language Pathologists provide direct service to student. According to the American Speech Language Hearing Association, school SLPs provide services to students from at least four different groups:

- school-age students whose primary disability under IDEA is speech or language impairment;
- students identified under IDEA with primary disabilities other than speech-language impairment (e.g., autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, etc.), but who receive speech-language therapy as a related service;
- preschoolers who are eligible for speech-language services;
- students who receive pre-referral intervention, such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and other services designed to help prevent future difficulties with language learning and literacy.

Currently, our Swallow Union SLP has a caseload of 43 students and our Florence Roach SLP has a caseload of 38 students. While the services on our IEP's are being met, the SLP at SU is not available to provide Tier I services for students in the

lower grades. This is represented by the fourth bullet earlier in this section describing RTI services. With preventative services, students may be able to overcome some minor needs and not even need to have SLP services at the Tier III level (often special education services). In addition to not providing tier I or II services, the 2014 Report on Caseloads issued by ASHA, defined the following impacts of high SLP caseloads:

- Caseload size may lead to group versus individual treatments. The report states, “Communication skills, in particular, appear to be positively influenced by small treatment group size; students tend to verbalize and/or use gestures to communicate more in small-group settings. In addition, students on smaller caseloads are more likely to make measurable progress on functional communication measures than those on large caseloads (Schooling, 2000, 2003).”
- Larger caseloads affect recruitment and retentions. The report states, “Large caseloads are also associated with the difficulties experienced by educational agencies in recruiting qualified SLPs (Woltmann & Camron, 2009; Katz, Maag, Fallon, Blenkarn, & Smith, 2010).”

Response

This additional .6 SLP will allow the existing SLPs to provide more direct Tier III instruction, freeing up staff to help with testing and to provide Tier I push-in support in the classroom or small group Tier II support to students.

.6 FTE School Psychologist
1.0 Guidance Counselor

In order to address the social emotional needs of students and align with recommended guidelines, we need to add a .6FTE school psychologist. In addition, a 1.0 guidance counselor is needed at the HS is needed to meet the MASCA recommendations, offer a Freshman support and orientation program to enhance transition to the HS, and allow other counselors to focus more on matriculation efforts.

Challenge

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered to students in grades 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 in March of 2014. At the middle school level, 22.1% of 6th grade respondents, 55.2% of 8th graders, 53.3% of ninth graders, 60.4% of tenth graders, 66.3% of eleventh graders, and 64.5% of seniors report having experienced somewhat high or very high levels of stress as a result of their academic workload during the previous twelve months. The need for social and emotional support also emerged as a theme from our parent open forum data. For example, one parent noted the need for “more emphasis on social and emotional development, not just academic and numerical outcomes such as scores. “Elected officials also expressed the need to support students’ social and emotional needs in their open forum sessions. This was echoed by a theme in the 2014 fall professional development survey of staff which demonstrated staff’s desire for further training in social emotional issues.

In a book titled, *School Psychology for the 21st Century Foundations and Practices* (Merrell, Ervin & Peacock, 2011), the authors cite the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommendation for a psychologist to student ratio of 1:1000 as well as three essential roles psychologists play including: assessment,

consultation, and intervention. According to the 2015 state enrollment data, Groton-Dunstable has 2573 students and 2.0 psychologists.

The Massachusetts School Counselors Association and the American School Counselors Association models strongly recommend no more than a 1:250 student to counselor ratio. The current student to counselor ratio at the high school is 1:289. In addition to the recommended ratios, we did an analysis of per pupil expenditures for guidance counselors against best in class districts. The results of this analysis demonstrates that we spend the least per pupil of all the cited.

Table 22: Best in class, expenditure per pupil for guidance counselors

District	Expenditure Per Pupil Guidance Counselors	District	Expenditure Per Pupil Guidance Counselors
Groton-Dunstable	\$185	Carlisle	\$457
Belmont	\$297	Lincoln	\$478
Sherborn	\$347	Sudbury	\$481
Dover	\$378	Hopkinton	\$484
Medfield	\$380	Lexington	\$542
Westford	\$397	Acton-Boxborough	\$559
Concord	\$422	Dover-Sherborn	\$626
Winchester	\$443	Weston	\$687
Littleton	\$444	Concord-Carlisle 9-12	\$891
Sharon	\$451	Lincoln-Sudbury 9-12	\$894

Response

One of the critical needs areas for the high school guidance counselor would be to support 9th graders. In an article titled, *At-Risk Ninth-Grade Students: A*

Psychoeducational Group Approach to Increase Study Skills and Grade Point

Averages, authors Kayler and Herman (2009) state, “Other researchers have found that the transition to high school is a challenge for many students. Reinhard (1997) described ninth grade as the pivotal grade for determining whether a student will graduate, and transitioning to a new school was the most cited factor for dropout (Roderick, 2003). School counselors were called upon to assist students during this time to prevent students from dropping out, support academic achievement, and foster connectedness to school (Akos & Galassi, 2004a, 2004b; Barber & Olsen, 2004).”

The addition of a guidance counselor would bring the ratio to 216:1 and would allow the staff to support the increasing social and emotional needs of our students, and allow the other counselors to put an increased effort into the college application process.

Fine Arts Staffing

.67 Music Teacher, .67 Art Teacher, .333 Theater Teacher, and a .166 Videography Teacher at the high school

To replace past cuts in our fine arts department, to increase fine and performing arts opportunities for students and to reduce class sizes in certain offerings, we would need these positions.

Challenge

This year, the fine arts department conducted a district staffing comparison with best in class districts. Student population figures were taken from the DESE site. Staffing numbers came from the individual High Schools' websites and it should be noted that differences in terminology sometimes made it necessary to apply the closest job descriptions and course offerings for comparison. As you can see, Groton-

Dunstable is the only one not to have a 3D program, one of only two districts not to have fine arts coordination, one of only three districts not to have a drama program, the highest ratio of students to teacher in music, and the second highest student to teacher ratio student in art.

The reduced offerings mean our students have less fine arts options. It was noted in multiple open forums that the community wants to have a marching band who can play in community events like the Memorial Day parades.

Table 23: Best in class vs. Groton-Dunstable fine arts ratios

District	Enrollment	Visual Arts	Music	Drama	3D Program	Dept Chair/Coord
Groton Dunstable	867	1:434	1:867	0	N	N
Acton Boxborough	1903	1:464	1:865	1:1903	Y	Y
Belmont	1236	1:309	1:412	1:1236	Y	Y
Concord Carlisle	1255	1:251	1:628	1:1255	Y	Y
Dover Sherborn	663	1:166	1:442	1:1326	Y	Y
Hopkinton	1122	1:187	1:561	1:1122	Y	Y -Music
Lexington	2093	1:233	1:381	1:1047	Y	Y
Lincoln Sudbury	1617	1:180	1:809	1:1617	Y	Y
Littleton	445	1:223	1:297	1:1483	Y	Y
Medfield	876	1:175	1:292	0	Y	Y Music/Art
Sharon	1104	1:276	1:552	1:552	Y	N -Unclear
Westford	1634	1:272	1:545	1:1634	Y	Y
Weston	707	1:177	1:283	1:707	Y	Y
Winchester	1209	1:403	1:403	0	Y	Y

One of the prominent themes in a 2014 student survey was that students wanted more options for the arts including music, drama, and art. This is best stated in the comment, “The arts department is incredibly neglected for such a good district.” In the

staff open forums, they articulated a need to restore “full-time” “certified librarians” at the elementary and middle schools as well as fine arts positions and curriculum leadership.

There was also a theme around the need to return programs cut for past budgetary reasons in the 2014 parent open forum and survey data. For example, one parent asked to “bring back teachers and programs that have been cut” with a number of attendees pointing out the “lack of foreign languages at the elementary school.” In regards to elected officials, they identified the following programs as areas that were cut due to the budget and need to be increased or improved: typing, foreign language, opportunities for STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math), drama and performing arts.

Response

Based on student sign-ups, we will hire the following new staff members to enhance our fine arts department: a .67 Music Teacher, .67 Art Teacher, and 333 Theater Teacher. The music teacher will be able to teach band during the school day and offer other music course options. The .67 art could offer sections such as ceramics, sculpture, and 3D design. We could once again offer a theater class and could reassume the videography class that recently lost funding through the Groton Channel.

Nursing Staff Additions

.5 Nursing Assistant at FR and a .7 Registered Nurse at the HS

In order to meet the needs of nurse visits and state recommended levels, we will need these additional positions.

Challenge

The district received a letter from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Department of Public Health. It was recommended that we adhere to the recommendations for school nurse/student ratio. The recommended level is 500:1. After that, every 50 students should be supported by an additional .1. It was cited that our high school levels were not in accordance with this recommendation. In order to adhere to this ratio, the high school would need a .7 additional RN. In addition to student ratios, frequency of office visits are also a factor. The Florence Roche Nurse's Office is understaffed in comparison to the other district nurse's offices based on office visits. Below is data compiled by Nurse Leader Lorinda Ortiz for the past school year.

Total Visits to the Nurse's Office 2014-2015 School Year by School:

- Boutwell (0.9 FTE RN) - 554 visits to the nurse
- Swallow Union (1.0 FTE RN) - 2576 visits to the nurse
- High School (1.0 FTE RN) - 2738 visits to the nurse
- Florence Roche (1.0 FTE RN) - 7243 visits to the nurse
- Middle School (2.0 FTE RN) - 10436 visits to the nurse

The breakdown of these 7243 visits is as follows:

- 1389 were due to injury
- 2265 were due to illness
- 2071 were scheduled appointments for an ongoing health concern
- 1518 were for other reasons (for example: soiled clothing, lost a tooth)

Response

This fall, the staffing levels shifted based on concerns in last year's data of office visits. The Boutwell nurse now works 6 hours at Boutwell Monday through Thursday

and 5 hours on Friday. In addition, the Boutwell nurse (the former FR nurse) helps out 2 hours each day at FR (M-Th) and 3 hours. This leaves the Boutwell with no nurse coverage during this time. In speaking with Carol Smith, the School Health Advisor at MDPH, she understood that our staffing visitation levels necessitated the nursing increase at Florence Roche. Thus, we are recommending an additional .5 Nursing Assistant at FR and a .7 Registered Nurse at the HS. This would provide 1.7 FTE nurses at the high school and 1.5 FTE at Florence Roche.

1.0 of 3 partial FTE's

At the HS, we will add an additional 1.0 of 3 partial FTE's to cover core academic classes in departments who were not part of the pilot. This will allow all of our content area coordinators one period off each, to help monitor their departments and to support the educator evaluation framework (if bargained to do so).

Challenge

In 2010-2011, the .33 curriculum management period was eliminated and the content areas coordinator positions were not funded. In the 2011 NEASC report it states, "Two major issues hinder the school community's ability to achieve its 21st century learning expectations and threaten the exemplary efforts made to have a student-centered school. Successive years of financial belt tightening have severely limited the school's implementation of the curriculum, assessment of and for student learning, and school resources for learning. Tight budgets have reduced middle administration, faculty, and support staff positions. Professional development needed to support curriculum development and revision, investigation of best teaching practices,

and assessment of achievement data is lacking. Tight budgets have also limited both implementation of technology in the curriculum and maintenance of technology. In addition to the community's budget shortfalls, the school has experienced extraordinary administrative turnover. Interim administrators and faculty members have worked well to hold things together in the short term and to provide stability in a time of transition. Nevertheless, the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations requires stable, full-time leadership for the long term. Years of inadequate funding have resulted in a professional culture marked by a lack of confidence and trust. It will take the combined efforts of the school board, central office administration, high school administration, faculty and staff, and parents and community members over time to find solutions and to keep the promises made in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations (p. 12)."

Response

One of the hallmarks of districts that continue to make significant improvements in student learning is they have a long-term investment in establishing, sustaining, and managing an observation-based teacher assistance approach that provides content-specific feedback (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, and Monegan, 2009). Currently our educator evaluation model provides teachers with five unannounced observations in a two year cycle. Guidelines on effective observation note that observations are more meaningful when they vary in session length, interval size and focus specifically on content instruction and student engagement. Having academic advisors at the high school, with one period of release time, would provide teachers with an opportunity to receive frequent, sustainable, content-specific feedback which will improve student outcomes

(Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, and Monegan, 2009). While stipends for content area coordinators have been restored, the non-teaching block has not been returned. Thus, an additional 1.0 of 3 partial FTE's to cover core academic classes in departments who were not part of the pilot. This will allow all of our content area coordinators one period off each, to help monitor their departments and to support the educator evaluation framework (if bargained to do so).

Priority Level 3

Enhanced Programing in Elementary

2.5 Additional Elementary Specialists, a 1.0 Technology Integration Specialist, and a 1.5 Library Media Specialist at the Elementary level

In order to revise the elementary schedule to offer enhanced programs, restore cuts to previous department staff, we would need 2.5 Additional Elementary Specialists, a 1.0 Technology Integration Specialist, and a 1.5 Library Media Specialist at the Elementary level.

Challenge

Based on a history of staffing cuts document the following positions were defined as cuts in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, in FY2011-2012, Physical Education was cut from two (2) days a week to one (1) day a week. Other specialist areas were cut as well. For example, the staffing history cut document shares that in FY2008, Foreign Language (FL) originally started in 1st grade. In FY2009, one (1) full-time foreign language teacher was cut, moving FL to start in 3rd grade. In FY2010, FL was cut from the elementary school all together. The document also shared that in

FY2009, the position of full-time Librarian was cut and replaced with a para-educator. In FY2010, the library para-educator was cut altogether. As a result, the library was staffed solely with parent volunteers for FY2010. In FY2011, a full-time para-educator was hired back to fill the void with continued assistance of parent volunteers. The previous full-time certified Librarian had professional expertise in research skills and brought this knowledge into the classrooms to support teachers and students. She would also recommend books to students and was certified to oversee classrooms/programs throughout the school. To cover the teacher's prep periods, the district offered self-contained library and computer class blocks, using paraeducators. These classes are not aligned with classroom curriculum. Staff report that when they were more directly related to the library and technology work, further curriculum integration was available to students. In addition, staff report the need for a technology integration specialist at the elementary level, similar to what the middle and high school have.

Response

Sugar and Holloman (2009) define the tasks associated with technology instructional support as modeling best practices, providing staff development, and technology integration. Technology integration specialists fill this role.

There are 3 benefits of learning a foreign language in elementary school. 1. Increased cognitive skill 2. Higher achievement in reading and math 3. Higher standardized test scores. The second language is taught 3-5 times per week as a separate subject in 45 minute blocks. The level of proficiency and benefits depends on how much the teacher is using the language in class (immersion based). The characteristics of a successful program is that nearly all the subject is taught in the

foreign language and second language is used by a means to communicate in class. Our previous program did not meet any of the criteria for effect foreign language programs. Thus, reinstating the previous model, would not yield a positive academic benefit to students. In order to have a research based program, we would need to extend the school day, or replace existing specials or core subjects and replace them with foreign language. Thus, the proposal is for a schedule that may incorporate an introduction to world cultures and language but not to a foreign language class. This option will be analyzed by the schools and a schedule will be developed and proposed. The outcomes of this schedule will determine which specialists class will run, whether these specialist classes will be full year or quarterly, and whether a model for an extended day will be feasible.

According to Weiss (2006), a research study involving Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario found that students in schools with trained librarians are more likely to say they enjoy reading and score higher on standardized reading tests. Schools without librarians, however, scored lower on the same exams. The report also says that there's a direct correlation between the decline in students who say they like to read and the lower number of elementary school librarians in the last five years. It is likely that the librarian will either offer one of the specialist options or that they will work in concert with teachers on embedded research pertinent to relevant curriculum.

Thus, in order to restore past specialist instructor cuts, offer an enhanced schedule for students, and offer authentic opportunities for research and technology integration, we would need 2.5 Additional Elementary Specialists, a 1.0 Technology Integration Specialist, and a 1.5 Library Media Specialist at the Elementary level.

Middle school summer admin assistant support, .375 middle school records secretary, and .5 athletic department secretary

Restore one middle school administrative assistant role to a full year (to cover summer tasks), restore the records secretary role (.375 FTE) at the middle school, and account for the actual hours worked. To support the growing athletic program in our district, the district needs to add a .5 Athletic Dept. Secretary.

Challenge

In FY2010, office secretarial services were reduced during the school year and completely eliminated during summer months. This reduction in summer support resulted in less preparation for the new school year, phones manned for fewer hours and limited open office hours. The Principal and Vice Principals now spend the summer doing a majority of the clerical work associated with the annual influx of students over the summer (20-30 students any given summer), with students exiting the District along with all other prep work needed to prepare for a new academic year. As a result, administrators are taken away from their important tasks/duties such as scheduling; new student enrollment; and student and faculty correspondence (including, but not limited to, the preparation of handbooks and teacher packets). In addition, without support staff to process mail, nurses do not have the necessary immunization records required for seventh grade students in a timely manner. In Mid-Year January 2014, the Records Secretary was cut from .875 (35 hours a week) to .5.

Response

We need to restore the MSS assistant to 261 days to help in the summer and increase the record's secretary by .375 FTE. This additional time will help staff accomplish the following tasks: attendance, the transfer of student records in and out of

the District, discipline reports, Dept. of Ed. reports, student data, and private school applications.

1.0 Business Clerk

This position would oversee the benefits management functions to ensure that appropriate monitoring and compliance occurs. This replaces a past cut and brings business staffing up to past cut numbers, to allow them to thoroughly monitor our finances.

Challenge

Prior to today, the business office consistently had 5 FTEs. A reduction took place when payroll was brought in-house in January 2013 (even with the increased workload), resulting in an FTE of 4.57. In October 2013, the business office was again reduced to an FTE of 4. Since then, we have restored an FTE of .5 and are currently at 4.5. The workload has increased steadily over the past 3 fiscal years, causing staff to work extended hours in an effort to maintain an adequate level of service.

Response

If a 1.0 Business Office Clerk was hired this would free up time for the Accountant and the Assistant to the Director of Business and Finance to keep these duties and delegate:

- Account Receivable
- Benefits Management
- District-wide Attendance and Record Keeping-correlation to leave plans
- Deposits
- Medicaid Reporting
- FTE's
- Student Activity Audits (new DESE regulation)
- Backup payroll person

- Additional duties assigned by the Director of Business and Finance

2.0 Network Technicians

One of these positions replaces one recently cut network staffer who moved to a data specialist role and whose position was not replaced. These positions are necessary to maintain all of the new infrastructure, hardware, and software that is needed in a 21st century learning environment.

Challenge

Although there was not an accurate inventory prior to FY15, we can use the FY13 Warrant Article and the equipment purchased since then as a guide for the dramatic increases in technology. Using this information as a reference, from FY13 through FY16, student devices have increased from roughly 500 to 1500 devices, which includes laptops, netbooks, desktops, Chromebooks and Apple iPads. Also noteworthy from the FY13 Warrant Article was continuing support for teacher laptop access. With the laptop system in place and the continual maintenance and refresh of teacher devices, we must factor in over 400 additional teacher laptops and Apple iPads.

As recently as FY15, there were a total of 5.0 FTE in the Technology Department, supporting five schools and a total of eight buildings. For FY16, the Technology Department staffs only 4.0 FTE. This is due to the district not hiring an additional data specialist that resigned in FY15, but rather transferring in a network technician into that role and not replacing the technician role. These positions are necessary to maintain all of the new (and existing) infrastructure, hardware, and software that is needed in a 21st century learning environment as well as supporting the effective use of this equipment.

The Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) provides guidance to districts on acceptable levels of technology support. Per DESE, for every 400-600 computers, a technology support person is recommended (1:400-600 ratio). At this time, GDRSD has a single technician support person for nearly 2,000 devices (1:2000). As we bring in additional devices, this ratio will get even higher.

Response

The addition of a 1.0 FTE Network Technician and a 1.0 FTE Helpdesk/Network Technician will allow for a more robust support system with faster responses to requests. With many demands placed on the department and various district initiatives (i.e. computer based testing, bring your own device (BYOD), etc.), increasing the Technology Department by 2.0 FTE will provide a stronger foundation and level of 'future-proofing' for the district moving forward.

Not including future budget and replacement cycles, adding 2.0 FTE Network Technicians to the existing 1.0 FTE Systems Administrator position will bring the district from a technology support ratio of 1:2000, down to 1:665.

Curriculum Coordination

K-12 Physical/Behavioral Health Coordinator, K-12 Fine Arts Coordinator, and transition 9-12 foreign language content area coordinator position to be a Grade 1-12 foreign language coordinator

Challenge

In 2004-2005, all coordinator stipends were cut except .33 9-12 ELA and Math. While other content stipends were returned throughout the years, the Physical/Behavioral Health and Fine Arts coordinator stipend have not been reinstated. In addition, the foreign language role that was reduced to a 5-12 position.

Response

Research has demonstrated that effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement (Cotton, 2003). Research conducted by King (2002), Elmore (2000), and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2000) confirms that this important role extends beyond the scope of the school principal to involve other leaders as well. The need for curriculum alignment holds true for all departments. Thus, we recommend the reinstatement of the K-12 Fine Arts, K-12 Health, and 1-12 Foreign Language coordinator stipends be reinstated.

1.0 Maintenance and 2.0 Custodians

In order to properly maintain the buildings and grounds, we need to restore the positions that were reduced in past budget cuts.

Challenge

Presently, the Buildings & Grounds Department employs 4 full-time Buildings & Grounds personnel and a Director of Buildings & Grounds to actively maintain 8 facilities and 10 fields. The responsibilities include the heating equipment, plumbing, electrical systems, elevators, food service equipment, custodian supplies, carpentry, alarms and security systems, intercoms and clocks, IPMP practices interior and exterior, moves, field maintenance, snow removal and sanding. Prior to July 2009, there were 5 fulltime Buildings & Grounds men plus the director. Tarbell Central Office closed in November of 2008 and moved to Prescott. In July 2009, the district laid off one man from the Maintenance Dept.

Since the layoff in 2009, 4 men maintain 132,703 sf of building square footage. These same men are responsible for 90.76 acres of grounds and 10 fields. The athletic

program has expanded over the years. During the sport seasons, field maintenance impacts the building maintenance as there is total involvement of the entire maintenance staff. Groton-Dunstable High School and Middle School North are now over 12 and 11 years old respectively. The buildings, roofs and all equipment are aging. The other school buildings are 20 years old or more. Preventive maintenance is taking a back step as staff attention is on repairs or replacements. Lately, various state and federal regulations have increased the workload. With only 4 men on staff, more reliance is on outside vendors is needed to meet the demand when the safety of students and staff is compromised.

Presently, 18 custodians are responsible for the cleaning of our buildings. In 2009 we employed 23 custodians. Since FY 2009, the staff was reduced either by retirement or layoffs. We made transfers to distribute the impact more evenly throughout the district. However, since September 2014, we have relied on hiring substitutes to alleviate the shortage of help during times of a custodial absence. The custodians on staff are proud to provide a good service to the district, but increasingly it has been difficult to maintain the level they are used to providing because they are so short staffed.

Response

Presently, our current staff includes two men certified in IPMP practices. These staff members have expertise in HVAC systems, water treatment and field maintenance. To meet the increased maintenance demands of the district, we look to reinstate the full-time position lost to attrition in July 2009. Restoring this position will allow preventive maintenance and upgrades to become priority in the district.

To minimize the impact of 16 hours lost at the High School, we took 4 hours each from the Middle School North, MS South and Florence Roche; leaving the High School short only 4 hours. Another custodian from the High School opted to transfer to both Middle School North and South for 4 hours each. Thus, we need to restore 2.0 FTE's (the 16 hours that was most recently cut) in order to appropriately clean our schools.

Priority Level 4

Kindergarten Assistants

In FY2010, reductions in para-educators resulted in the loss of all Kindergarten classroom assistants. Currently, we are requesting 1.5 kindergarten aids for the existing half day kindergarten sections, but this number may be adjusted if the district moves to a full day kindergarten model in the future. We need to assess the need for full day kindergarten in the next few years.

Boutwell Special Education Consulting/Coaching

We know we need special educational consulting support for our recently adapted inclusion model at the preschool. Currently, we are in need of a .4 consulting special educator. However, as Boutwell enrolls all year as students with identified special needs age in (age 3), staffing needs will likely need to be adjusted based on the needs of incoming students.

Additional English Language Learner Support

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides districts with guidance on identification, assessment, placement, and reclassification of English

Language Learners (ELL) students. As of August 2015, the state mandates that all students who are WIDA Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 receive at least two to three periods (a period is not less than 45 minutes) per day of direct ESL instruction, delivered by a licensed ESL teacher. Based on these requirements, we would need an additional .5 licensed ESL teacher. Another policy change at the state level is that we are now required to screen all of our high school Foreign Exchange students. If they qualify for services we are required to provide services unless they opt out of services. Thus, we plan to enhance language requirement for incoming foreign exchange students.

Lunch Aides

To allow for a reorganization of staff to support increasing our co-taught offerings at both levels, we need to invest in lunch aides at the elementary and middle schools. In order to support the use of para-educators in the classrooms, as well as implications of limited staff due to the reconfiguration needed to move from an inclusion model to an enhanced co-teaching model (1-8), the district needs to consider the implications of providing alternative coverage for lunch and recess. The restructuring model will decrease the number of available para-educators to cover lunch supervision of students. Based on the necessary lunches and ratios, the district is planning for 12 lunch aids to work 3 hours a day. These are non-benefited positions.

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APPENDIX A

Supporting Documentation (Municipal Finances)

		Dunstable	Groton
	2014 Population	3,303	11,017
	2015 Tax Rate	\$16.73	\$18.27
	2015 Single Family Parcel Count	1,031	3,163
	2015 Single Family Average Value	\$391,063	\$398,416
	2015 Average Single Family Tax Bill	\$6,542	\$7,279
	2011 DOR Income Per Capita	\$60,690	\$56,475
	2014 EQV Per Capita	\$139,697	\$137,925
FY2015 Assessed Values by Class		Dunstable	Groton
	Residential Percent of Assessed Value	96.8%	93.7%
	Commercial Percent of Assessed Value	1.6%	4.7%
	Personal Prop. Percent of Assessed Value	1.7%	1.6%
FY2015 Municipal Revenue Sources		Dunstable	Groton
	Percent from Tax Levy	79.8%	75.9%
	Percent from State Aid	2.5%	2.2%
	Percent from Local Receipts	13.0%	17.3%
	Percent from Other Revenue	4.6%	4.5%
Other Financial Indicators		Dunstable	Groton
	2012 Debt Percent of Budget	6.1%	5.9%
	Free Cash Amount as of 7/1/2014	\$424,798	\$1,181,587
	FY14 Stabilization Fund	\$323,436	\$1,998,120

Source: [MA DOR](#)

BIC Instructional Materials and PD Per Pupil Expenditure

District Source: DART Finance/Staff Report	Instructional Materials/Equip/Tech PPE	Professional Development PPE
Groton-Dunstable K-12	124	139
Acton-Boxborough	230	105
Concord-Carlisle 9-12	472	159
Concord	566	190
Carlisle	597	547
Lexington	494	191
Sharon	437	122
Westford	313	174
Belmont	351	129
Dover-Sherborn 6-12	387	93
Dover	488	88
Sherborn	381	91
Lincoln-Sudbury 9-12	430	128
Lincoln	519	349
Sudbury	349	171
Weston	575	242
Hopkinton	380	90
Medfield	310	233
Winchester	314	142
Littleton	494	191

APPENDIX B

Appendix B: Professional Development Support Items

Table 1-1: 2014 TELLMass scores with 2015 Growth

Survey item	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	+
Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.	9.7%	54.8%	45.1%
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	13.3%	46.6%	33.3%
Professional development offerings are data driven.	18.0%	61.1%	43.1%
Professional development opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	47.7%	66.2%	18.5%
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	10.4%	48.6%	38.2%
Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.	27.9%	58.3%	30.4%
Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	65.7%	66.7%	1.0%
In this school, follow up is provided from professional development.	22.6%	37.5%	14.9%
Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	22.6%	48.6%	26.0%
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	19.4%	31.5%	12.1%
Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.	32.1%	53.4%	21.3%
Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.	37.4%	64.4%	27.0%

BIC PD Calendar Analysis

Elementary School Analysis

District	Details	PD Hours Elementary
Groton-Dunstable	1 full day and 4 half days, secondary	18.5
<u>Acton-Boxborough</u>	1 full day and 3 half days, all staff	15.5
<u>Concord-Carlisle</u>	4 full days 9-12, high school	26
<u>Lexington</u>	1 full day and 4 half days, all staff	18.5
<u>Sharon</u>	7 half days, all staff	21
<u>Westford</u>	2 full days and 6 half days, all staff	31
<u>Belmont</u>	1 full day, 8 half days, elementary	30.5
<u>Dover-Sherborn</u>	1 full day, 6 half days, secondary	24.5
<u>Lincoln-Sudbury</u>	3 full days, high school	19.5
<u>Weston</u>	4 full days, 7 half days, all staff	47
<u>Hopkinton</u>	3 full days, all staff	19.5
<u>Medfield</u>	4 full days and 4 half days, all staff	38
<u>Winchester</u>	1 full day and 3 half days, high school	15.5

Secondary School Analysis

District	Details	PD Hours Secondary
Groton-Dunstable	1 full day and 4 half days, secondary	18.5
<u>Acton-Boxborough</u>	1 full day and 3 half days, all staff	15.5
<u>Concord-Carlisle</u>	4 full days 9-12, high school	26
<u>Lexington</u>	1 full day and 4 half days, all staff	18.5
<u>Sharon</u>	7 half days, all staff	21
<u>Westford</u>	2 full days and 6 half days, all staff	31
<u>Belmont</u>	1 full day, 8 half days, elementary	30.5
<u>Dover-Sherborn</u>	1 full day, 6 half days, secondary	24.5
<u>Lincoln-Sudbury</u>	3 full days, high school	19.5
<u>Weston</u>	4 full days, 7 half days, all staff	47
<u>Hopkinton</u>	3 full days, all staff	19.5
<u>Medfield</u>	4 full days and 4 half days, all staff	38
<u>Winchester</u>	1 full day and 3 half days, high school	15.5

APPENDIX C

Entry Plan



Superintendent,
Groton-Dunstable Regional School District

Entry Plan Goals

Cultivate positive, trusting, constructive relationships with the school department and the local community to minimize the potential disruption caused by a change in administrative leadership.

Through data review, research, open forums, site visits, and interviews, build a foundation for continuous improvement by identifying strengths and targeting areas for growth.

Create a shared, sustainable vision for the future of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District that highlights and utilizes our strengths and addresses our identified areas for needed growth and improvement.

The activities of my entry plan include but are not limited to:

- a review of relevant documents and data;
- visits within the district and in both towns;
- participation in conversations with individuals and groups within the district;
- dedicated time to review the current mission and culture; and
- the development of goals for the 2014-2015 school year and the development of a five year strategy.



The purposes of my entry plan are to:

- *learn about the school district;*
- *introduce myself to the community; and*
- *establish a basis for future leadership.*

Pre-Entry

January 2014
-May 2014

Get to know the
community.

Pre-entry activities included:

- a review of the interview questions (to understand district's priorities).
- a review of the job description/essential job functions.
- a review of the DESE superintendent's annual checklist.
- a review of 5 years of budget reports and documents.
- a review of the district's current goals.
- a review of school improvement plans.
- a review of the schools' state report cards.
- a review of district and school web sites.
- a review of curriculum documents.
- initial meetings/conversations with relevant staff.
- attending all available school committee evening meetings.
- organizing and beginning focus group meetings with stakeholders.
- creating a dedicated public space to share progress on these activities.
- participating in the hiring of a new Director of PPS.
- a review of staff evaluations.
- a review of TELL Mass results.
- a review of aggregate and disaggregated assessment results (including MCAS, SAT, AP).



Pre-Entry Events Attended:

- March 2: Attended Jack & the Beanstalk Play through Groton-Dunstable Community Education
- March 11: Attended MARS Legislative Breakfast at Nashoba Valley
- March 27: Spoke to Mr. Vilagomez's class about Funding Education in MA
- March 31: Attended the 9th Annual Women's MASS Educational Leadership Conference
- April 3: Was a Reader at the Community Read-In Event at Florence Roche
- April 8: Attended the Yale Emotional Intelligence Conference with Lyn Snow
- April 17: Presented to MASC Division 1 on the PARCC Field Test
- April 29: Attended the Day on the Hill on Beacon Hill
- May 21: Attended the MVSA Scholars Luncheon
- May 29: Appeared on Groton Channel's *Around Town* program
- May 30: Attended the GDRHS Graduation



Pre-Entry Meetings Attended:

- January 22: Special School Committee with Budget and Finance Focus. School Committee and the Selectmen and Finance Committee members of Groton and Dunstable
- January 22: School Committee Meeting
- January 28: Community Financial Information Evening in Dunstable
- January 30: Community Financial Information Evening in Groton
- February 3: Special School Committee Meeting with Budget and Finance Focus
- February 10: PPS Interview Preparation
- February 11: PPS Interviews
- February 12: School Committee Meeting
- February 18: Special School Committee Meeting (Budget)
- February 18: Special School Committee with Budget and Finance Focus. Joint meeting of G-D School Committee and the Selectmen and Finance Committee members of Groton and Dunstable
- February 19: PPS Interviews
- February 20: Special School Committee Budget Meeting: Potential Reductions
- February 24: Special School Committee Meeting with Dunstable FinCom
- February 25: Meeting with PPS Director Finalist #1
- February 26: School Committee Meeting & Executive Session
- March 3: Meeting with PPS Director Finalist #2
- March 4: Special School Committee Meeting with Dunstable FinCom
- March 6: School Committee Meeting
- March 12: School Committee Meeting & Executive Session
- March 18: School Committee Executive Session Meeting
- March 20: Budget Document Meeting
- March 26: School Committee Meeting & Executive Session
- April 4: School Committee Meeting
- April 9: School Committee Meeting
- April 22: Meeting with Senator Eileen Donoghue
- April 24: School Committee Meeting
- April 30: School Committee Meeting
- May 12: Dunstable Town Meeting
- May 28: School Committee Meeting



Entry

June 2014-
November 2014Meet key people,
analyze data and
define goals

Entry Phase

Site Visits to Schools

It was my pleasure to visit all schools in June. I toured the buildings with principals, met with staff and students, and learned the layout of the buildings. In addition, I visit each school at least once a month during the school year, with each site visits lasting roughly three hours in length. These site visits are in addition to attending school and community events and activities.

Individual and Small Group Meetings

The intent of these meetings is to get to know key people in the schools and community. In addition to initial meetings, I meet individually with all building principals monthly, meet with central office administrators weekly, meet with school committee members bi-monthly, and met individually with town officials and town department heads. I also intend to continually meet with small groups of key stakeholders such as leaders of parent organizations and others on an individual basis.

Department Document Review

In coordination with central office staff, I will conduct a comprehensive department data review. This data review is intended to support the identification of strengths and needs in each department, as well as department data trends. The data review will include the following departments: special education, business and finance, curriculum and instruction, professional development, human resources, and technology.



Focus Groups

I began my focus groups by meeting with the following groups in June.

- Boutwell Staff
- Florence Roche Staff
- Swallow Union Staff
- Middle School Staff
- High School Staff
- Technology Department Staff
- Central Office Staff



I ask two questions: What works? What do we need to work on? I compile notes from each of those sessions. The intent of this work is to identify areas to celebrate and continue as well as identify areas to focus for future growth. Summaries of these notes are shared with participants. In addition to in-person discussions, an online survey was distributed to staff, parents, and community members. A review of findings will be analyzed and used as an important data point in the development of the strategic plan.

Focus groups continued throughout the summer and into the fall. Groups for focus groups include the following:

- Elected Boards and Committees (e.g. School Committee, Board of Selectmen, and Fin Com)
- Parent Organizations (e.g. SLAC and Open Parent Forums)
- Community Organizations (e.g. Library Trustees and Council on Aging)
- Student Groups

Department Reviews

As a component of the strategic planning process and entry plan, I will participate in financial, personnel, and special education department review. This work will be done in collaboration with the Director of Business and Finance, Assistant Superintendent, HR Specialist, and Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

New Superintendents Induction Program (NSIP) Participation

As a participant in this program, I will receive 80 hours of coaching from an experienced and successful former superintendent. I will be observed and be given feedback, be provided resources, and meet with a cohort of new and experienced superintendents for 8 full professional development days. In addition, I will participate in a series of trainings with the school committee on school committee governance and supporting a new superintendent (in partnership with MASC).



Entry Plan Findings

The entry plan findings will be written into a white paper. This document will be presented publicly at school committee, shared with all staff through weekly correspondence, and sent out to all parents and community members via school messenger and the website. This document will also be used by the strategy committee in the development of a five year strategy for improvement.

Synopsis of Entry Plan Activities as of July 2014

Site Visits

I was so pleased to be asked to attend a great and well-attended author celebration at Florence Roche on Tuesday evening. Student writing skill and growth was evident and they were so proud to read their pieces to their families.

I also had a wonderful time at the Middle School 8th grade celebration. I am confident that the students are excited and well prepared to move on to the high school in the fall!

It was a pleasure to conduct open forums in each school. We have an amazing staff and they provided me with helpful information to highlight as strengths and identified areas for growth. This information will contribute to the work we do around strategic planning.

Individual and Small Group Meetings

I had an opportunity to sit down with all building principals in June. We discussed what they saw as areas of strength and need in the district. We also defined a mechanism for our monthly meetings and my role this coming year to support their growth and their schools' success.

I met with union leadership in June. We discussed increasing communication and building a positive and collaborative approach.

I also met with Mark Haddad, Groton Town Manager, and we discussed the desire to support one another now and into the future. We discussed the benefits of our new tri-board working group and ways that our departments can work together.

In addition, I met with Madonna McKenzie, Dunstable's new Town Administrator. We discussed areas for collaboration between the town and schools as well as opportunities for enhanced meetings and communication.

I had the opportunity to speak with Claire Liliedahl from "SLAC". This group of parent leaders will be tremendously supportive to the district.

I met with Dina Mancini who works as the district's attendance officer in addition to her duties as assistant principal at the middle school. We reviewed current practices regarding investigating residency and attendance cases.

I met with Karen Tuomi and we discussed her summer programs, the Barometer, her leadership in the ALICE program, and a potential project that she may support regarding using Prescott as a space for wellness programs for staff.

As part of my entry plan to review past administrative work, I met with Tony Bent the first week in June. We discussed his leadership over the past two years. I also met with Mary Jennings, who provided me with a great summary of the schools under her leadership.

In regards to central office, I met with Lyn Snow to review the current status of the special education department. She is doing great work to review programs and budgets. An individual meeting with Jared Stanton (Dir. Of Business and Finance) was conducted to review the status of the business office. In addition, I had two individual meetings with Kerry Clery (Curriculum) and Andy Marcinek (Technology), before they left to review the status of their departments.

As part of my entry plan, I met with three members of the leadership team of the SEPAC. We talked a lot about continued collaboration. I also met with members of the APEX group. We had a good conversation about what their group does and is looking to do in the future to support the schools. In addition, I invited both community groups as members of SLAC to have a representative put a name forward to be a SLAC representative on the strategic planning steering committee.

In early July, I met with the entire central office staff and posed my entry questions to them. They took the entry plan survey electronically and their responses will be used with all others in the analysis of data for my entry plan and in our strategic plan.

Department Reviews

Lyn Snow, Jared Stanton, and I began a review of paraprofessional and clerical staff across the district. The paraprofessional audit will be supported by our new Board Certified Behavior Analyst who is tasked with conducting the review of assignments, IEPs, and scheduling and producing a report for us. We feel that this work will help us understand the staffing we have as well as our needs.

APPENDIX D

Report of Entry Findings



Respectfully Submitted by:
Kristan Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Groton-Dunstable Regional School District

January 30, 2015

Introduction

I have been afforded a wonderful opportunity for thoughtful entry into the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. I cannot thank the community at large enough for the time, support, and feedback provided to me during this entry phase. The report enclosed is a culmination of eight months of data review, meeting with a variety of stakeholders, and working in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. I was also lucky enough to begin my pre-entry phase a year ago in January of 2014, when I conducted a number of observations and meetings with staff and community members.

The purposes of my entry plan were to:

- learn about the school district;
- introduce myself to the community; and
- establish a basis for future leadership.

My activities included, but were not limited to, the following:

- a review of relevant documents and data;
- visits within the district and in both towns;
- conversations with individuals and groups within the district; and
- a review of the current mission and culture.

As a product of this entry phase, I promised to publish the enclosed report of entry findings and use this report to help guide the development of a five-year strategy to be published in June of 2015. This report is a product of contributions by many. I thank them wholeheartedly for their support in this process.

Connection of this Work to the Strategy

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District is a very high performing district collectively poised for even further growth and achievement. Recently, the strategy committee worked with all stakeholders to develop a new vision statement to guide our practice. Below is our finalized vision. We expect that all work moving forward, including how we will address the findings discussed in this report, will get us closer to realizing our vision.

Vision Statement: Through a balanced, thoughtful and innovative education, all Groton-Dunstable students will become curious, engaged and skilled learners who are well-prepared for continued success and contributions to a global society.

In addition to developing a new vision statement, the strategy committee, as well as the district leadership team, reviewed initial entry plan findings to identify themes in the data. Collectively, we determined that the data fit cleanly into 4 categories, which will be used in strategy development as well as in this report.

- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Management and Operations
- Family and Community Engagement
- Professional Culture and Human Resources



Executive Summary

In summary, the findings illustrate that we have an overall strong academic program. We have capable and prepared students, talented and caring staff, engaged and active parents, and a supportive community who value a quality education. The identified areas of need will be used by the strategy committee for further review and research in the development of potential goal areas.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- We have many strengths related to this area including our high academic performance. Our overall academic performance is one of the best in the state and country. We offer many enrichment opportunities for our students including clubs, athletics, and the performing arts. Our students leave GDRSD with a high percentage attending college.
- The three areas for improvement are in the achievement gap for students with disabilities as compared to the general education population; in the difference in English language arts performance of students as compared to math and science; and in the depth of our overall enrichment programming such as areas related to social and emotional health, and extended special subject programs such as the arts, library, and world language offerings.

Management and Operations

- It was noted in numerous data points that our schools are safe spaces for learning. This is best exemplified by our recent safety report from our safety liaison that details recent initiatives such as updating school safety plans, conducting drills, providing ALICE training, developing new safety plans such as an infectious disease plan, and developing a new community wide crisis team in partnership with local police and fire officials.
- Based on the data, the areas of need in this category relate to long-range planning and financing our district. In regards to long range planning, it was noted in multiple data sets that there is no vision or strategic plan for the district. In addition, there are no long-range capital or technology plans. The district financial picture was a large theme in multiple data sets as well. The fluctuation and variability of state aid was a major theme as was our funding limitations from assessments, resulting in an overreliance of Excess and Deficiency and the depletion of contingency funds this past spring.

Family and Community Engagement

- The data suggests a very active and involved parent population and a community who values strong schools. This is exemplified in the staff open forum data where one of the three areas of strength was identified as cooperation between schools and families. Teachers articulated that they are grateful for “parent involvement,” “PTA support,” and their “connection to students and families.”
- The area of need with regard to family and community engagement revolves around communication. Specifically, people want increased communication methods, streamlined and accurate communication, and transparency.

Professional Culture

- By far, the data represents that staff, students, parents, and community members feel that the Groton-Dunstable Regional School district employs excellent staff. This was well captured by a student who said, “The teachers teach a productive and exciting lesson every day.” Another student noted, “The best thing in Groton-Dunstable is the teachers and how they help us with our work.”
- In areas of need, it was clearly articulated that staff want a more enhanced professional development program. In addition, a review of human resource functions, processes, and forms defined the need to align current procedures with bargaining agreements, policies, and laws.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

This category relates to the learning of all students as the central focus of the school district. It encompasses curriculum alignment, instructional strategies, and data based decision making as central components of program review.

Strengths

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District has a strong educational program. Academic rankings in pertinence to indicators such as MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System), SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), AP (Advanced Placement exams), and other state and national rankings indicate that Groton-Dunstable offers a strong overall academic program that provides a firm foundation for college and career success. For example, *Newsweek* recently ranked Groton-Dunstable Regional High School as 86th in the nation and ranked us 5th in the state. Our MCAS scores demonstrate stronger overall performance than the state average on every indicator and stronger overall performance than our comparable districts. In addition, we received multiple years of College Board's AP Honor Roll designation for high performance and high participation.



Academic program strength also showed up on other data sets such as open forum and survey data. For example, we had 319 students in grades 3-12 respond to an online student survey. The analysis of their responses demonstrated themes of what works in our district. A common theme was student appreciation for the strong academics in the schools coupled with a strong culture. For example, one student noted, "How good we are academically is really our strong point. Also, we have a good culture in Groton; it is really welcoming and supportive." Another theme was around non-academic offerings in the schools such as the following quote, "great sports and music program, the ability to start our own clubs." Many others noted their appreciation for other specialist areas such as physical education.

During my entry phase, I held three in-person open forums for parents and sent out online surveys, for which we received 94 electronic responses and had well over 100 parent participants altogether. When posed with "What Works?" in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, one of the prominent themes was the high level of performance of the schools in the district. For example, one parent stated that the district has "wonderful programs for students who want to excel" and another mentioned how the district is both "motivating and preparing our students for college and careers."

This appreciation for the academic strength of the district was echoed by elected officials (School Committee, Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committee in Groton and Advisory Board in Dunstable). Some feedback was collected via meetings and other responses

came as a follow-up to a brief survey. While many areas and items were mentioned, the following were thematic responses: Graduation rates and college acceptances were mentioned as evidence of our strong academic preparedness, as were strong MCAS scores. One group noted their appreciation for “kids entering college well-prepared”. This is all supported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) profile of GDRHS which shows that the 4-Year Graduation Rate for 2014 was 99%. While the DESE website on graduates attending higher education is outdated (2012 is the most recent data), our annual report filed each year by the GDRHS guidance department demonstrates that college placement summaries dating back to 2007 suggest an average college placement percentage of 95%.

Areas of Need

While overall academic strength is strong, one area that is worth pursuing is the discrepancy between math and English language arts (ELA) scores in the same cohort of students. Across the board and over multiple measures, students in Groton-Dunstable fair comparatively better in math (and science) than they do in ELA. For example, our median student growth percentile (SGP) in ELA is 49 but our median in math is 65. Compared to like and local districts, we have the lowest comparable SGP in ELA, but the highest in math. In looking at elementary MCAS scores over the past five years, we have had historic declines in ELA, but we are at an all time high in math. Out of the eleven districts represented in the DART (District Analysis and Review Tool) results from the state (that compares us to like districts across the state), Groton-Dunstable has the highest scores on the Math MCAS, tied for second with our science scores, but was third from the lowest in our ELA scores. This represents overall district results and the same cohort of students across subject areas. In relationship to AP scores, our 2014 AP achievement analysis showed that our ELA performance of percentages of students scoring 3 or better averaged 78.8% and the math and computer science averaged 90.6% (with 100% in both calculus sections earning a score of 3 or higher). This pattern also emerged in the SAT scores where average student scores in reading and writing were below math. We analyzed five years of SAT data to determine that on average, the average math score is 580, the average reading score is 547, and the average writing score is 534. In 2014, the average SAT score in mathematics was 584, 549 in reading, and 536 in writing. While we outperform overall Massachusetts scores in all three areas, the difference is highest in math (61 points higher) versus reading (41 points higher) and writing (37 points higher).

MCAS ELA and Math comparability to DART and some local districts

	G-D	Duxbury (DART)	Hamilton-Wenham (DART)	Medfield (DART)	Harvard (DART)	Westford	Acton-Boxboro
Advanced/proficient ELA	83%	87%	84%	86%	89%	89%	94%
Median SGP ELA	49	60	58.5	55	60	57.5	55
Advanced/proficient Math	81%	71%	77%	78%	83%	87%	86%
Median SGP Math	65	62	50	61	58	57	56
Advanced/proficient Science	78%	75%	81%	77%	87%	85%	84%

Another trend that needs further review is the widening gap between our general population of students and the performance of our high needs subgroup (chiefly our special education population). For example, when examining the 2014 accountability data, Groton-Dunstable's Pupil Performance Index (PPI) for students with disabilities are below state averages and at a 5-year low. In addition, the most recent state accountability data sets Groton-Dunstable as a Level 2 district. This designation is based on the lowest performing school within the district. Currently, our only Level 2 school is the middle school. Based on the district data, the district did not meet targets for the special education subgroup whose cumulative progress and performance index was the lowest in the district at 42. When examining our high needs population enrollment data, there is an increase in our overall special education population. Based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, our overall percentage of special education students in the district increased from 13.8 % in 2009-2010 to 14.8 % this school year. According to a report developed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), the overall number of special education students has risen from 385 in 2010-2011 to 392 as of October of 2014. By developing in-house programs, our total outside placement numbers appear to be lowered from 26 in 2010-2011 to 22 in October of 2014. Therefore, more of our special education students are being serviced within our district's schools. The need to address special education students was echoed by staff survey data that identified "a need to improve intervention and support for special needs students" as a major theme for improvement. This was also identified in the open forums for town and elected school officials who identified support for students with IEP coverage as an area of concern.



One additional theme in the data was the need to address the social and emotional learning of our students. While our district has been spending less of our per pupil expenditures in pupil services over the past three fiscal years, there is an increase in the amount of spending in guidance, counseling, and testing, which may indicate that our students' social/emotional needs are increasing. This topic was also highlighted in our parent survey where the need for additional focus on the social and emotional development of the students was articulated. One parent noted the need for "more emphasis on social and emotional development, not just academic and numerical outcomes such as scores." Elected officials also expressed the need to support students' social and emotional needs. Likewise, a theme in the fall professional development survey of staff demonstrated staff's desire for further training in social emotional issues. This is exemplified by a staff response that read, "As an elementary school teacher, I would like to see a more focused training about childhood anxiety." Through the support and assistance of Emerson Hospital, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey was implemented with students in grades 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 in eight school districts including the Groton-Dunstable Regional Schools, during March of 2014. At the middle school level, 22.1% of sixth grade respondents and 55.2% of eighth graders report having experienced somewhat high or very high levels of stress as a result of their academic workload during the previous twelve months. In grade 6, females (27.4%) experienced this more frequently than males (17.5%) and in grade 8, female respondents (63.8%) also report this experience more frequently than males (46.7%). This pattern was continued in the high school where 53.3% of ninth graders, 60.4% of tenth graders, 66.3% of eleventh graders, and 64.5% of seniors report having experienced somewhat high or very high levels of stress as a result of their academic workload during the previous twelve months. Again it was much higher among females (females – 71.5%, males – 50.9%).

One final area identified in the data was the need to replenish educational programming that was lost due to fiscal issues in the past few years. In our student survey, one of the prominent themes in areas for improvement was that students wanted more options for the arts including music, drama, and art. This is best stated in the comment, “The arts department is incredibly neglected for such a good district.” In the staff open forums, they articulated a need to restore “full-time” “certified librarians” at the elementary and middle schools as well as fine arts positions and curriculum leadership. This theme of lost programming was echoed in parent open forums and surveys, where there was a theme around the need to return programs cut for past budgetary reasons. An open forum attendee remarked that the district needed to “return support staff and programs so the needs of children across the entire spectrum are addressed.” Parents asked to “bring back teachers and programs that have been cut” with a number of attendees pointing out the “lack of foreign languages at the elementary school.” In regards to elected officials, they identified the following programs as areas that were cut due to the budget and need to be increased or improved: typing, foreign language, opportunities for STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math), and drama and performing arts.

Management and Operations:

According to the state’s Standards and Indicators of Effective Administrative Leadership Practice, effective administrative leadership “promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, using resources to implement appropriate curriculum, staffing, and scheduling.”

Strengths

Our district has identified strengths that relate to safety and an effective learning environment. For example, it was noted in a number of surveys and meeting notes that the schools are safe and that there are safety plans being developed and regularly revised to ensure safety. This is evidenced in the safety report from our safety liaison that details recent initiatives such as updating school safety plans, conducting drills, providing ALICE training, developing new safety plans such as an infectious disease plan, and developing a new community wide crisis team in partnership with local police and fire officials. Another indicator of safety is reflected in the TELL Mass results, which include anonymous survey responses from our staff. An analysis of the findings from the March 2014 administration show that in the following areas regarding safety and discipline, agreement was over 90%:

- Teachers have adequate space to work productively
- The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning
- Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct
- Students at this school follow rules of conduct
- Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by faculty
- Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct
- The faculty work in a school environment that is safe

Our Mission: The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, in cooperation with the parents and the community, is committed to providing the best possible education for each student. It is our responsibility to promote in each child a spirit of inquiry and to instill a self-sustaining desire for continuous growth and service to self, family and community.

Areas of Need

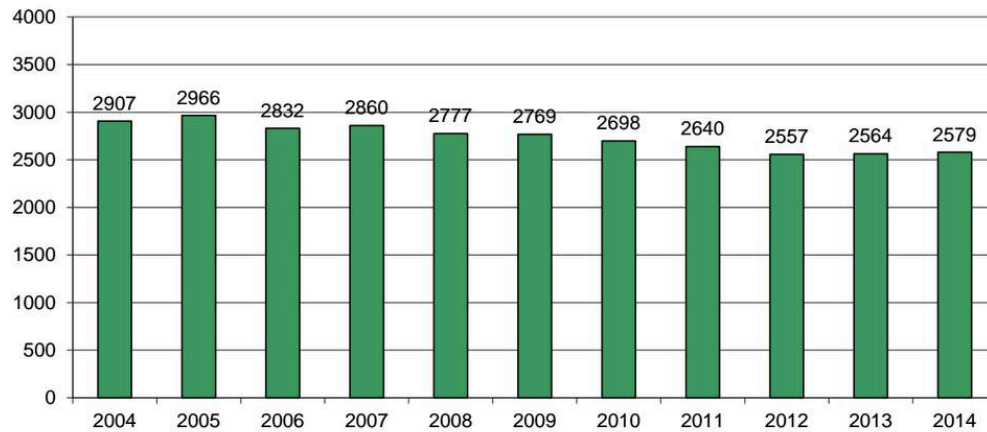
One of the foundations of this area revolves around the development and implementation of a long-range strategy for the district. Of note, there is a Preliminary Strategic Plan that runs from 2009- 2014 in the superintendent's office. However, it does not appear to have been finalized or shared widely. This past summer, the administrative team conducted a *Signs of Strategy* self-assessment. Based on an analysis of findings, our strongest readiness area was that our district focuses on the instructional core. Our weakest area of preparedness was that no current strategy or finalized strategic plan exists and thus there is no focus, coherence, or synergy in our improvement planning. Therefore, there is no ownership or enactment of said plan across the district. In addition, when posed with "What Do We Need to Work On?" in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, our parent open forum and online survey data identified the need for a long-term vision and planning. For example, one parent noted that the district needed to provide "a more competitive environment for learning with a long-term strategic vision." Another parent stated the need for "long-term vision [with] transparency and objectives and goals." In addition to the need for a five-year strategic plan, it was mentioned numerous times in individual and small group entry meetings that our district is also in need of long-range plans for capital and technology.

The ongoing need for budget planning and projections was also mentioned several times by our elected officials. This is of concern both with regard to district function/needs and our towns' abilities to support education. This past fall, a ten-year analysis was conducted on the state aid received by the district. Extreme variations in this aid from year to year (-8.8% in 2009 or +1.7% in 2013 for example) means that the district must rely more heavily on local funding. In addition to the variability of state aid, regional assessments impact the budget. Chiefly, the current regional agreement defines funding based on per pupil numbers. Historically, this represents an average of a 25 (Dunstable)/ 75 (Groton) split. Therefore, we cannot have Groton pay more than 3 times what Dunstable contributes. If Dunstable raises their taxes to the levy limit (2.5 %), our assessments of that would estimate roughly a \$100,000 increase in any fiscal year. Based on the existing agreement, this means that Groton can then only contribute a \$300,000 increase even though this amount represents far below their levy limit. If we add those together it is an increase of \$400,000, which represents roughly a .9 percent increase in our overall operating budget. This is not a sustainable model and is likely why there was reliance on E/D funds whenever there was variability in state aid. In fact, this very pattern emerges when we review historical financial data.

As a product of a partnership with NESDC (New England School Development Council), we had a historical enrollment review conducted. Fluctuations in enrollment occurred over the past ten years. We ranged from 2.3 % increases to 5.1 % decreases. Overall, our enrollment is down 10.9 % from 10 years ago but our enrollment has gone up for the past two years. Of note, our 9-12 enrollment is at a ten year high with 102 more students than we had ten years ago. Our biggest drop is in grades K-4 with a ten-year difference of 310 students since 2004-2005. These fluctuations in enrollment impact our state aid but they cannot necessarily correlate to staffing needs. For example, if there are 20 students who leave, they are not all in the same grade or school and thus cannot necessarily result in a consolidation of staffing or services. However, it does mean a decrease in revenue from Chapter 70 for each child. Budget shortages in recent years have led to cuts in staffing. In particular, and relating to the sections above on special education and specialist area subjects, staff saw these reductions as a result of fiscal issues and not programmatic decisions. It was noted that budget cuts led to the elimination of programs

and positions, especially affecting “fine arts,” “guidance,” “special education support”, and “curriculum leadership” as evidenced in the curriculum section.

PK-12, 2004-2014



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Family and Community Engagement

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), family and community engagement, “promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff through effective partnerships with families, community organizations, and other stakeholders that support the mission of the school and district.”

Strengths

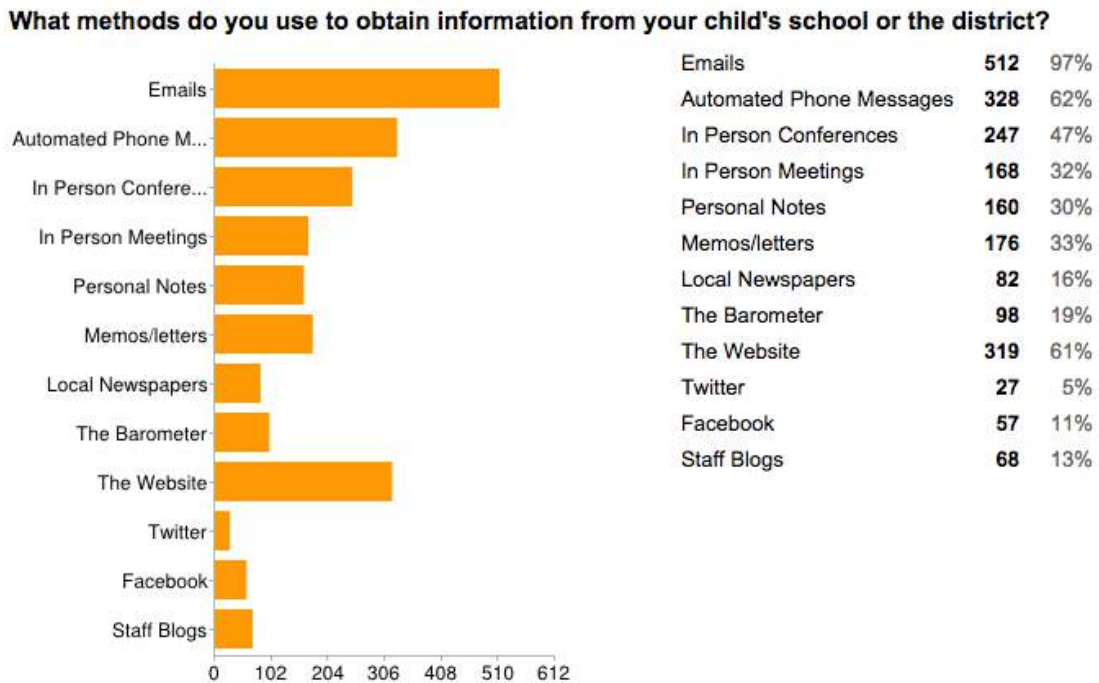
It is shared in numerous places in my entry findings that families are actively engaged, involved, and supportive of our schools. Based on the staff open forum data, one of the three areas of strength was identified as cooperation between schools and families. Teachers articulated that they are grateful for “parent involvement,” “PTA support,” and their “connection to students and families.” In addition, an analysis of the district TELL Mass survey results showed that in the following areas agreement was over 90% by our district staff: “Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school” and “The school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.” This was further supported by our elected officials in both Groton and Dunstable, who have a strong appreciation of district communication with the towns as well as the new joint budget meetings. Superintendent visibility in the communities was also noted as a positive.

Areas of Need

Based on the data, it appears that one of the themes for improvement revolves around a desire to increase communication. We were thrilled that we received 527 responses to our Parent Communication Survey that was administered in October of 2014. Out of a possible rating of 10, the overall rating was 7.3. The second question on this survey asked about which methods of communication are most used by parents. The top three

methods were identified as email (97%), automated phone messages (62%), and the website (61%). The final question on the survey read, “In the space below, please tell us what GDRSD needs to do to improve our efforts to communicate with parents and the community.” Of the 527 respondents, 250 parents provided comments in this section. Our central office team completed a qualitative analysis of these comments and four themes emerged, which will help us to improve our communication with parents and the community. The first theme was focused on improvements we need to make to our district web site. The comment that best exemplified the overall message was, “The website is difficult to navigate and does not provide timely & uniform information.” When discussing the importance of consistency, one parent said, “Have just ONE spot (i.e. the school's front web page) as the parent's go-to location for their most up to date and full info.” A number of parents also noted the importance of being consistent about how much notice we provide before events. The third theme was that social media is a nice addition to district communication, but it should not be used as a sole vehicle for communication. Best stated, “Continue to use email and post on the school website. I personally would not want to have to rely on Twitter or Facebook as a method of communication.” Lastly, transparency and accuracy were mentioned in numerous parent comments. One comment said, “Emails are great but whoever sends them needs to have the information straight before sending.” When discussing transparency, one parent noted, “We would appreciate if there was a higher level of transparency.” The desire for increased communication was also in our parent open forums and online survey data. One of the four themes for improvement was the desire for increased communication and consistency. For example, one parent stated the need for more “communication to the larger community when we are not in budget crisis.” Lastly, it was noted by numerous community and town officials that they appreciate strong lines of communication with the schools and would like this to continue and increase.

Answers to Question 2 of the Parent Communication Survey



Professional Culture

As defined in the state's Standards of Effective Administrative Leadership, professional culture should "promote success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff."



Strengths

It is evident that the district employs strong and capable staff. As mentioned in the category of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, our students have a strong appreciation for staff. This theme was apparent in many other data sets as well. After reviewing the responses given at the Parent Open Forums and the online survey results, one of the prominent themes was an appreciation for our faculty. One parent noted that the district has "excellent teachers [who] provid[e] a safe, happy environment with limited resources." Another parent remarked that the schools have "strong faculty who have sustained a great deal of turnover." In addition, an analysis of the district TELL Mass survey results showed that in the following areas, agreement was over 90% by our district staff: Teachers have adequate space to work productively; Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning; Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction; and The faculty are committed to helping every student learn. Teachers expressed similar opinions when posed with the question, "What Works?" in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. A review of hundreds of teacher responses to open forums and online survey data suggest a prominent theme of appreciation for fellow staff. One is the recognition of the faculty and staff's dedication, collegiality, and professionalism, expressed by comments such as the "team works really well together," the staff is "supportive, caring" and develops "close relationships with students [and the] community," "secretaries/custodians" and "guidance" going "above and beyond," and the "dedicated, professional staff" have "mutual respect" for one another. One person summed it up by saying "[our] colleagues are fantastic." This was further supported by elected officials in both Groton and

Dunstable. Throughout their responses ran a theme of appreciation for staff. It is summarized by a few areas such as students being supported by role models and with the following quotes, “Kids feel connected to at least one staff member.” Additionally, the current teacher student ratio was touted as a plus. In addition, the theme of collegial staff relationships was woven throughout the responses. It was noted that the current level of comradery and collaboration is a strength that contributes to a positive environment. The theme of “team” was also mentioned multiple times with regard to teacher and administrator interactions.

Areas of Need

When posed with “What Do We Need to Work On?” in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, teachers and staff had several concerns that were expressed last June. One common theme was the need to improve professional development (PD) opportunities. Teachers want the district to offer more “workshops” in general, to restore previously offered programs, such as “The Skillful Teacher” and “Teachers as Scholars,” and to consider the whole child through “behavioral training.” District-determined PD, they say, should be “more useful” and “effectively” planned on half- and full-release days. Another indicator of our need for professional development is reflected in the TELL Mass results. An analysis of the finding from the March 2014 administration illustrate that of the 12 lowest agreement areas, professional development was in 8 of them. It is these areas that the district needs to focus on: Professional development offerings are data driven; Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers; Professional development deepens teachers’ content knowledge; In this school, follow up is provided for professional development; Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices; Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers; Professional development enhances teachers’ ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs; and Professional development enhances teachers’ abilities to improve student learning.

Additionally, the human resources internal audit defined a number of areas that need to be reviewed and refined to align to the contract, policies, and related laws. The focus areas have been identified as benefits management, payroll, licensure, educator evaluation, job descriptions, and hiring practices.

Conclusion

This report represents hundreds of opinions and numerous data sets, and it is important that it not just sit on a shelf. Thus, it will be shared with everyone electronically in January and presented formally to the school committee in February. In addition, based on the findings outlined in this report, the strategy committee will begin the work of researching and analyzing areas identified for improvement. Based on these findings, the strategy committee will conduct root cause analyses upon the emerging themes and priorities. From there, we will define 3-5 strategic objectives, develop a theory of action, and create strategic initiatives for each objective. This will culminate in a comprehensive 5-year strategy. Future school improvement plans, annual district improvement plans, and long range capital and technology plans will be aligned with this strategy. All of this work will help to achieve the newly adopted vision for our district.



APPENDIX E

QUALITATIVE SELECTION BIAS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is important to acknowledge the following sample bias in our qualitative surveys and open forum data.

- **Undercoverage.** Undercoverage occurs when some members of the population are inadequately represented in the sample. An example of this may be found in the faulty open forum data. In participating in thematic coding exercises, themes of frequency were those that were highlighted in the report of entry findings. Due to the smaller number of staff in certain departments, they may not have had enough numbers to result in a frequency large enough to be included in the report.
- **Nonresponse bias.** Sometimes, individuals chosen for the sample are unwilling or unable to participate in the survey. Nonresponse bias is the bias that results when respondents differ in meaningful ways from non-respondents. An example of how this can happen is with the community open forums. In one session with seniors in Dunstable, less than 30 participants attended the open forum. The sample size was small in relationship to the total population of seniors in Dunstable. Thus, we must be careful not to overly generalize these forums as fully representing the entire stakeholder group.
- **Voluntary response bias.** Voluntary response bias occurs when sample members are self-selected volunteers. An example of this can be found in our parent communications survey. The survey was sent electronically. The sample method may have made those comfortable with technology more apt to respond and potentially skewed the results to preferred electronic formats as preferred communication methods.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP DATA SUMMARY

I asked two questions: What works? What do we need to work on? I compiled notes from each of those sessions. The intent of this work was to identify areas to celebrate and continue as well as identify areas to focus for future growth. Summaries of those notes were shared with the staff. A review of findings will be analyzed and used as an important data point in the development of the strategic plan.

Individual and Small Group Meetings

Administration

· As part of my entry plan to review past administrative work, I met with Tony Bent the first week in June of 2014. We discussed his leadership over the past two years. I also met with Mary Jennings who provided me with a great summary of the schools under her leadership. They provided me with a framework for past administrator priorities and focus areas. Some topics included budget, staffing, and building community relationships.

· I had an opportunity to sit down with all building principals in June of 2014. We discussed what they saw as areas of strength and need in the district. We also defined a mechanism for our monthly meetings and my role this coming year to support their growth and their school's success. A focus of these meetings was the need for consistent leadership at the district level and long range district planning.

· I met with Dina Mancini who works as the district's attendance officer in addition to her duties as assistant principal at the middle school. We reviewed current practices regarding investigating residency and attendance cases. The issue of residency is important as we must

ensure that we are in compliance with the laws surrounding residency and that we are using tax payer dollars to educate eligible residents or eligible school choice students.

- When I met with Karen Tuomi, we discussed her summer programs, the Barometer, her leadership in the ALICE program, and a potential project that she may support regarding using Prescott as a space for wellness programs for staff. We discussed the importance of school safety as a district priority.

- I met with all central office staff individually to review their departments. This included interviews with the outgoing Director of Technology and outgoing assistant superintendent. Both articulated the issues that the district faced prior to district leadership being in place in curriculum and technology. They articulated financial needs in their departments for items such as professional development, curriculum leadership, curriculum materials, and ongoing funds for equipment renewal that a previous debt exclusion provided to the district.

- To further review our existing district's readiness for the development of a strategy, we conducted an internal survey of all district administrators to determine our development against a rubric used to determine signs of a strategy in a district. Teams of administrators were broken into three groups to answer the survey questions and define what that looked like in practice and then came together to determine overall district results. The likert scale went from Little or No Impact (1) to High Impact (3). As defined in the summary of the survey below, our strongest readiness areas is that our district focuses on the instructional core. Our weakest area of preparedness is that no current strategy or strategic plan exists and thus there is no focus, coherence, or synergy in our improvement planning and therefore there is no ownership or enactment of said plan across the district.

Staff

- I met with union leadership in June. We discussed increasing communication and building a positive and collaborative approach.

- In early July of 2014, I met with the entire central office staff and posed my entry questions to them. They took the entry plan survey electronically and their responses will be used with all others in the analysis of date for my entry plan and in our strategic plan. Their main focus was on consistency in district leadership, a desire to stay in a central location together, and the need for clerical and administrative support at the district level.

Parent and Community

- I met with Mark Haddad and we discussed the desire to support one another now and into the future. We discussed the benefits of our new tri-board working group to increase communication about finances between the schools and towns and ways that our departments can work together.

- I met with Madonna McKenzie, Groton's new Town Administrator. We discussed areas for collaboration between the town and schools as well as opportunities for enhanced meetings and communication.

- I had the opportunity to speak with Claire Liliedahl from "SLAC". This group will be a valuable resource to the district in which I can meet regularly with leaders from all parent

organizations. This group was designated as a working group for strategy development surrounding family and community engagement.

· I met with three members of the leadership team of the SEPAC. We talked their priorities which included collaboration with administration and parent training. I also met with members of the APEX group. We had a good conversation about what their group does and is looking to do in the future to support the schools financially. In addition, I invited both community groups to be active members of SLAC to have a representative put a name forward to be a SLAC representative on the strategic steering committee.

Open Forum and Survey Data

Staff

· I began my focus groups by meeting with the following groups in June of 2014. These open forums were held at mandatory faculty meetings and thus the entire teaching staff were present. The following staff groups were interviewed.

- o Boutwell Staff
- o Florence Roche Staff
- o Swallow Union Staff
- o Middle School Staff
- o High School Staff
- o Technology Department Staff
- o Central Office Staff

· When posed with “What Works?” in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, teachers and staff echoed three prominent themes. One is the recognition of the faculty and staff’s dedication, collegiality, and professionalism, expressed by comments such as the “team works really well together,” the staff is “supportive, caring” and develops “close relationships with students [and the] community,” “secretaries/custodians” and “guidance” going “above and beyond,” and the “dedicated, professional staff” have “mutual respect” for one another. One person summed it up: Our “colleagues are fantastic.” The second theme is gratitude for access to technology. Teachers are enthusiastic about the “great new equipment,” and the “opportunities” for forming “learning groups” (in class and professionally) through the use of technology. The Technology Team is proud of the educational “initiatives” they can foster through the use of “Chromebooks” and “Google Apps” and the excitement they are building within the school “culture around computer science (e.g. Technovation, tech ed. Club, and the Hour of Code).” Another positive theme is the cooperation between schools and families. Teachers are grateful for “parent involvement,” “PTA support,” and their “connection to students and families.”

· When posed with “What Do We Need to Work On?” in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, teachers and staff had several concerns. One common theme was the need to improve professional development (PD) opportunities. Teachers want the district to offer more “workshops” in general, to restore previously offered programs, such as “The Skillful Teacher” and “Teachers as Scholars,” and to consider the whole child through “behavioral training.” District-determined PD, they say, should be “more useful” and “effectively” planned on half- and full-release days. They also want the district to offer PD that positively impacts their earnings, such as “more [in-]service credit opportunities” that provide graduate credits needed for lane changes and “better reimbursement for courses” taken at outside institutions. Several people cited the need for targeted PD for particular staff, including “administrative assistants,”

“Pre-K/specialists,” “SPED,” “paras,” and “subs.” A second theme was a need to improve intervention and support for special needs students. Many teachers report that the “SPED support” is lacking because the staff is “spread too thin.” Several report “the big problem” that, because of the lack of staffing “IEP’s are not [being] covered” and schools are out of compliance. “More paras,” “appropriately placed,” are needed, as are “nurse aides for SPED classrooms” and “reading support” to improve the “integration” and success of special needs students in regular education classes. A third theme was the need for more opportunities to collaborate. Requests were made to “include Pre-K in district discussions” and to provide teachers with time and support for team meetings, “collaborative planning,” “consult time for regular ed. and SPED” teachers,” as well as “aligning [curriculum] with the common core” curriculum development in general. A third theme was the need to restore “full-time” “certified librarians” at the elementary and middle schools. This sentiment was echoed strongly within several groups surveyed. Overwhelming concerns, before Dr. Rodriguez’s arrival, surrounded the lack of consistency and transparency in the district leadership. Poor communication and a top-down approach compounded the problems that eventually exposed a lack of “consistency of the budget.” Poor budget control and planning affected the consistency of the curriculum: budget cuts led to the elimination of programs and positions, especially affecting “fine arts,” “guidance,” SPED support, and “curriculum leadership.” “Changes in staffing [and] scheduling” added to remaining staff’s already “heavy workload.” The staff continues to be burdened with doing more with “less personnel.” The revolving leadership also made demands for “changing curriculum,” sometimes at the whim of administrators’ personal interests and sometimes by a reactionary effort to catch up with mandates or keep up with educational trends neglected by a lack of leadership and vision.

Students

· We had 319 students in grades 3-12 respond to our student survey. The analysis of their responses demonstrated three themes of what works in our district. The biggest theme with an appreciation for staff. Specific examples of teachers and principals were used but the overall message was well captured by a student who said, “The teachers teach a productive and exciting lesson every day.” Another student noted, “The best thing in Groton Dunstable is the teachers and how they help us with our work. They also help us with what we struggle most on in school.” Lastly, one student noted, “Teachers in the district are great with learning and teaching and getting the children in the district ready for their future.” Another common theme is student appreciation for the strong academics in the schools coupled with a strong culture. For example, one student noted, “How good we are academically is really our strong point. Also, we have a good culture in Groton; it is really welcoming and supportive.” A final theme was around non-academic offerings in the schools such as the following quote, “great sports and music program, the ability to start our own clubs.” Many others noted athletics and clubs along with other specialist areas such as gym.

· When asked, “What do we need to work on?” an additional three themes emerged. The first theme was that students in all grades would like to see improvements to the school lunches. Two common suggestions were to provide more offerings and bigger portions. This was best stated in the following quotes: “The lunches would be much better if we got bigger portions,” and “We need to work on having better tasting foods. Also, we need a more variety of foods including gluten-free options.” The second theme was that students in elementary and middle schools wanted more time for recess and better playground equipment. A number of middle school students shared comments like the following, “I think that the seventh and eighth graders need recess because we work hard and when we get a break, we have to read.” Our elementary school students noted that they would appreciate more time during recess to get “fresh air.” The last

theme was that students wanted more options for the arts including music, drama, and art. This is best stated in the comment, “The arts department is incredibly neglected for such a good district.”

Parents

· We held three in-person open forums for parents and sent out online surveys, for which we received 94 electronic responses and had well over 100 parent participants altogether. After reviewing the responses given at the Parent Open Forums and the online survey results, four consistent themes were found for both questions. When posed with “What Works?” in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, one of the prominent themes was the faculty. One parent noted that the district has “excellent teachers [who] provid[e] a safe, happy environment with limited resources.” Another parent remarked that the schools have “strong faculty who have sustained a great deal of turnover.” The second distinct theme was the high level of performance of the schools in the district. A parent stated that the district has “wonderful programs for students who want to excel” and another mentioned how the district is both “motivating and preparing our students for college and careers.” Communication was another theme throughout the Forums. One attendee pointed out that “communication is much better this year from the Central Office and other administrators.” A parent thanked the district for “increased communication” and another noted the many methods of communication, pointing out “Twitter, Facebook and the website.” The final and fourth theme was the parents. Attendees noted the number of “involved parents” and “parental and community involvement and support.”

· When posed with “What Do We Need to Work On?” in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, one common theme expressed was the need for long-term vision. One parent noted that the district needed to provide “a more competitive environment for learning with a long-term strategic vision.” Another parent stated the need for “long-term vision [with] transparency and objectives and goals.” The second theme was the need to return programs cut for past budgetary reasons. An attendee remarked that the district needed to “return support staff and programs so the needs of children across the entire spectrum are addressed.” Parents asked to “bring back teachers and programs that have been cut” with a number of attendees pointing out the “lack of foreign languages at the elementary school.” The need for additional focus on the social and emotional development of the students was another theme. One parent noted that the need for “more emphasis on social and emotional development, not just academic and numerical outcomes such as scores.” As another parent mentioned the need for “better school-life balance,” an attendee also remarked on the need to create “more emphasis on creating a love for learning” and that this should be “linked to vision.” The final theme was communication and consistency. While also a theme for “What Works?” parents commented on the need for additional improvement in this area. One parent stated the need for more “communication to the larger community when we are not in budget crisis.” Another parent noted the “need to build upon community-wide pride,” pointing out the “you vs. them” feeling last year. One final area was around consistency when it came to homework. For example, one parent noted, “An area that created much concern is homework. There is a disconnect between teachers within a grade...”

Elected Official and Community Members

· Community forums were held in person, in both towns. In addition, online surveys were sent out via local media. In regards to “what works,” “the successful academic achievement in college admission of students” was noted, as was our MCAS results and college acceptance

rates. When commenting on what we need to work on, one theme that emerged was the importance of the collaboration among all town departments. One comment noted, "The school district shall work with municipalities' budgets and share resources with all departments."

· As part of the information gathering process for the Strategy planning process feedback was solicited from elected officials (School Committee, Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committee in Groton and Advisory Board in Dunstable) in both Groton and Dunstable. Some feedback was collected via meetings and other responses came as follow-up to a brief survey. The first inquiry sought to get feedback regarding our strengths and successes as a district. While many areas and items were mentioned the following were thematic responses: Multiple responses from different elected sub-groups highlighted the communication from the district to outside constituent groups. There is strong appreciation of the communications with the towns as well as the joint meetings. Superintendent visibility in the communities was noted as a positive feature. Graduation rates and college acceptances were mentioned as evidence of our strong academic preparedness, as were strong MCAS scores. One group responded "kids entering college well-prepared".

· Throughout the responses was a theme of positive learning environment. Students feel safe and are supported by great role-models; both among the staff and their student peers. "Kids feel connected to at least one staff member" and "kids support each other". Additionally, the current teacher student ratio was touted as a plus. This theme of collegial staff relationships was woven throughout the responses. The current level of "comradery" and collaboration is a strength that contributes to a positive environment. The theme of team was mentioned multiple times with regard to teacher and administration interactions. A few concerns were made regarding morale during the current contract negotiations.

· Following discussion of our strengths the respondents were asked to consider how we could improve as a district. Responses from this group identified the ongoing need for budget planning and projections was mentioned several times. This is of concern both with regard to district function/needs and towns' abilities to support education. A theme was identified regarding curriculum and programming. As a district we need to hold our own in comparison with other districts. Support for student social and emotional needs was mentioned both for students with IEP coverage and those without identified special needs. Specific need to review and increase/improve the following programs were mentioned: typing, foreign language, STEM, dramatics, student organization, professional development, and technology

DOCUMENT REVIEW SUMMARY

Headings Derived from Entry Plan Goals Document

A review of the interview questions (to understand district's priorities).

· There was a focus on community engagement, instructional leadership, and financial management experience in the interview questions.

A review of the job description/essential job functions.

· The job posting asked for experience as a teacher and school administrator. It also stated that central office experience and/or a background in regional schools enhances the candidacy.

A review of the DESE superintendent's annual checklist.

· The annual checklist demonstrated the need for a strong core central office staff to lead the many unfunded mandates and tasks. There is a heavy emphasis on financial needs and a heavy data need in regards to assessment and student/staff information reporting.

- § Continue to provide evaluators with training at meetings throughout the year
- § Provide staff with ongoing orientation and training as necessary through district-wide curriculum half days throughout the year
- o Implement the Common Core Standards
- § Continue to align the curriculum with the Common Core State Standards
- § Collaborate with educators to develop at least one goal pertaining to the Common Core State Standards
- § Provide professional development around the CCSS during curriculum release days
- § Continue with the implementation of standards-based report cards at the elementary level and provide ongoing professional development on standards based grading
- o Enhance Technology
- § Integrate laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, etc. funded by the warrant article
- § Implement upgraded infrastructure and provide wifi access to all buildings in the district
- § Transition staff and students to Google apps for Education
- § Provide consistent support and professional development opportunities for staff, teachers and students on Google Apps for Education
- § Explore 1:1 options for students over the next two years
- § Explore options for digital textbook and library collections
- o Leadership Enhancement
- § Support the Superintendent search process as determined by the school committee
- § Develop and implement a revised budget process and documents for FY15
- § Provide professional development for all staff about special education regulations, terminology, responsibilities, practices, procedures and services.
- § Implement response option changes to the school crisis plans; evaluate and improve security equipment at all sites; produce consistent plans/actions throughout the District
- § Complete an audit in an effort to provide a more efficient model for printing and copying throughout the district

A review of school improvement plans (2013-2014 Goals).

- HS 2013-14
 - o Continue the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.
 - o Enhance technology for teaching and learning.
 - o Increase community service awareness and participation for Groton-Dunstable students.
 - o Continue to improve writing across all disciplines.
- MS 2013-14
 - o To implement differentiated instructional strategies to provide students with different learning pathways in the acquisition of content, process and the development of ideas.
 - o To implement a program(s) that addresses the unique needs of identified high-end learners.
 - o To create and enhance a positive school climate free of all forms of bullying.
- FR 2013-14
 - o To improve student learning as measured by local, state and national curriculum standards and assessments through implementation of the MA Common Core Standards.
 - o To provide a safe and nurturing environment that allows students to reach their greatest potential in the areas of social and emotional development, responsible citizenship and creative expression.
 - o To improve student learning through technology by providing the resources necessary to maintain classroom technology and supporting infrastructure.

- SU 2013-14
 - To utilize the use of new technology to enhance our curriculum.
 - To strengthen our reading instruction.
 - To continue our transition to the Common Core State Standards.
- Boutwell 2013-14
 - Improve marketing and increase enrollment.
 - Increase the use of technology in teaching and learning.
- Create an increasingly safe and secure learning environment for students, staff and families.
- Review and make recommendations for the Early Childhood Center Budget.

A review of the schools' state report cards (2014).

- Overall MCAS proficiency scores are well above state averages. Growth percentages are slightly below state average for ELA but higher than state averages for math.
- The 2014 state accountability data sets Groton-Dunstable as a Level 2 district. This designation is based on the lowest performing level any one school within the district. By and large, our schools are designated as Level 1 schools. Currently, our only Level 2 school is the middle school. Based on the district data, the district did not meet targets for the high needs population (low income and special education students).

A review of district and school web sites.

w The district website was the source of a lot of feedback from the staff and community. People articulated that the site was hard to navigate and they were looking for a space for all district communication and important documents to be housed. They also asked for such tools as a more interactive calendar that related to all schools.

A review of curriculum documents.

w There was a lack of defined curriculum documents in the district such as curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents, clearinghouse of syllabi, and vision statements. This will need to be a focus for the curriculum department moving forward.

A review of staff evaluations.

w The results of overall 2013-2014 ratings for educators in Groton-Dunstable is consistent with statewide trends.

A review of TELL Mass results

· In the spring of 2014, staff at Groton-Dunstable participated in the TELL Mass Survey. This survey is an anonymous state survey of licensed educators aimed at assessing the staff's perceptions on supports that are necessary for effective instruction. The survey asks questions in the following categories:

- Community Engagement and Support
- Teacher Leadership
- School Leadership
- Managing Student Conduct
- Use of Time
- Professional Development
- Facilities and Resources
- Instructional Practices and Support
- New Teacher Support

w An analysis of district results showed that in the following areas, agreement was over 90%:

- Teachers have adequate space to work productively

- o The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning
- o Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school
- o The school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement
- o Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning
- o Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct
- o Students at this school follows rules of conduct
- o Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by faculty
- o Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct
- o The faculty work in a school environment that is safe
- o Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction
- o The faculty are committed to helping every student learn
- o The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards
- The areas with the lowest agreement were as follows:
 - o Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.
 - o Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school
 - o The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school
 - o Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school
 - An appropriate amount of time is provide for professional development
 - o Professional development offerings are data driven
 - o Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers
 - o Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge
 - o In this school, follow up is provided for professional development
 - o Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices
 - o Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers
 - o Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs
 - o Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning

A review of aggregate and disaggregated assessment results (including MCAS, SAT, AP)

MCAS Trends

· Groton-Dunstable performs above state averages in all grades and all subject areas when examining MCAS proficiency levels. Our MCAS math growth is higher than all DART and local districts, and students at all three levels are making improvements and many cohorts are performing at five-year highs. Conversely, there have been declines in ELA at multiple levels, and Groton-Dunstable has a low overall Student Growth Percentile (SGP) and low performance when compared to DART and local districts. When examining the 2014 MCAS data, Groton-Dunstable's Pupil Performance Index (PPI) for students with disabilities is below state averages and at a 5-year low, so we will continue to focus on minimizing this performance gap. We will continue to explore the needs of this cohort.

Comparable District Data

· Through a service called DART, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provide a snapshot of district performance in comparison to "comparable districts". This comparability is defined as a similarity in grade span, enrollment, and special populations. It does not take into considerations such as per pupil expenditure.

· Of the eleven districts represented, Groton-Dunstable has the highest scores on the Math MCAS, tied for second with our science scores, but was third from the lowest in our ELA scores. This represents overall district results and the same cohort of students across subject areas.

2013-2014 SAT Data

· 196 students took the SAT and performed above state averages in all three testing areas and performed at five-year highs in math with an average score of 584.

2013-2014 AP Data

· In FY14, we offered 17 AP exams at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School. In total, 316 tests were taken last year (2013-2014) with an overall passing rate of 84.2%.

ADDITIONAL DATA

Parent Communication Survey

· We are thrilled that we received **527 responses** to our Parent Communication Survey that was administered in October of 2014. Following is a summary of the responses. The first question asked respondents to give us a baseline satisfaction rating for communication overall. Based on comments, it appears that some parents included last year's communication as well as this fall's new modes of communication. The overall rating was 7.3. The second question demonstrated what methods of communication are most used by parents. The top three methods were identified as email (97%), automated phone messages (62%), and the website (61%). The final question on the survey read, "In the space below, please tell us what GDRSD needs to do to improve our efforts to communicate with parents and the community." Of the 527 respondents, 250 of you provided comments in this section. Our central office team completed a qualitative analysis of these comments and four themes emerged, which will help us to improve our communication with parents and the community. The four themes are identified below:

· The first theme was focused on improvements we need to make to our district web site. The comment that best exemplified the overall message was, "The website is difficult to navigate and does not provide timely & uniform information."

· When discussing the importance of consistency, one parent said, "Have just ONE spot (i.e. the school's front web page) as the parent's go to location for their most up to date and full info." A number of parents also noted the importance of being consistent about how much notice we provide before events. For example, "There should more lead time between notifications and events actually occurring." Although parents noted the importance of having one central location to post all news, it was also clear from the quantitative data that emails are valuable and used by 97% of parents. To increase effectiveness, parents mentioned consistent distribution. One suggestion was, "Be consistent, as much as allowable with timing of e-blasts or newsletters - (say, every Friday afternoon, or the first Monday of the month, etc.) so we know when to expect it and makes it more valuable than just another message."

· The third theme was that social media is a nice addition to district communication, but it should not be used as a sole vehicle for communication. Best stated, "Continue to use email and post on the school website. I personally would not want to have to rely on Twitter or Facebook as a method of communication."

· Lastly, transparency and accuracy were mentioned in 9% of parent comments. One comment said, "Emails are great but whoever sends them needs to have the information straight before sending." When discussing transparency, one parent noted, "We would appreciate if there was a higher level of transparency."

Coordinated Program Review-English Language Department

· This fall, the district's submitted a Coordinated Program Review Corrective Action Plan ELE progress report, which the Department reviewed. Based on the action plan provided it was

determined that we met all requirements and thus no further progress reports were required. The corrective actions taken to accomplish no further findings of non-compliance included hiring a new license ELL teacher for the district and purchasing new ELL curriculum.

Title I Needs Assessment

· As defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, “Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, provides financial assistance to districts and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state.” Based on our small population of low income students, Groton-Dunstable receives \$50,412 in FY15. In order to cut our achievement gap in reading by 2017, we shifted our Title I reading intervention program from the elementary level (FY13) to the middle school level (FY14) to better address the needs of those students who are struggling in reading and math. Our middle school is our Level 2 school, so we want to target students at the school who are influenced by this gap. This year's funds will be utilized to pay for a reading specialist at the middle school level who will target our lowest performing readers and it will be put toward a math specialist as well for those who are struggling in math. Through this model, our students who struggle in reading and math will get supplementary reading instruction and math intervention in addition to the regular English Language Arts and/or math blocks each week. Additionally, the reading tutor and math specialist will provide targeted progress monitoring as this group of students progress. Ongoing data will be collected to determine action plans for each child in the areas of reading and mathematics.

APPENDIX F

Glossary

Best-in-class: A term that is often used in the business industry to refer to companies that tend to set the standards for other companies to aspire. Best in class is typically considered a company that has set the benchmark that others in the industry seek to at least meet in order to be competitive, although the goal is often to exceed that mark and set a new industry standard.

CPI: Massachusetts uses the 100-point Composite Performance Index (CPI) to measure progress towards this goal of narrowing proficiency gaps. The CPI assigns 100, 75, 50, 25, or 0 points to each student participating in MCAS and MCAS-Alternate Assessment tests based how close they came to scoring Proficient or Advanced. (For example, all students scoring Proficient or Advanced are assigned 100 CPI points; students with very low MCAS scores are assigned 0 CPI points.) The CPI is calculated by dividing the total number of points by the number of students in the group. The result is a number between 0 and 100. A CPI of 100 means that all students in a group are proficient.

In-service courses: These courses, proposed and facilitated by teachers, are 15 hours and meet before or after school. Taking an inservice course is the equivalent of taking a 1 credit graduate course. Our offerings this year correspond to relicensure requirements, which require all teachers with professional status to earn 15 hours in teaching students with disabilities and 15 hours in teaching English language learners (ELL) students.

Multi-part series: Our multi-part series are mini-courses that are proposed by Unit A staff members and administrators in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP). These courses offer 10 hours of PD in a specific content area. The course meets three times during the year on scheduled curriculum days. Teachers choose their series based on their PD needs.

TELL MASS Survey: a statewide survey of school based licensed educators to determine if they have the supports necessary for effective teaching.