CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

AGENDA #21

The School Committee will hold a regular meeting:

on: Thursday, October 15, 2015
at: 6:00 p.m. - Executive Session
         7:00 p.m. – Regular Session
in the: Esther Howland South Chamber at City Hall

ORDER OF BUSINESS   ACTION

I.   CALL TO ORDER - REGULAR MEETING

       INVOCATION -   Reverend Carla Dietz
                       Greendale People's Church

       PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/NATIONAL ANTHEM

II.   ROLL CALL

III.   APPROVAL OF RECORDS

       aor #5-19 - Clerk
                    (October 7, 2015)

       To consider approval of the Minutes of the School
       Committee Meeting of Thursday, October 1, 2015.

IV.   MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION

V.   <u>IMMEDIATE ACTION</u>   <u>ACTION</u>

<u>gb #5-169.1</u> - Administration/Mr. O'Connell/Mr. Monfredo/
                   Mr. Foley/Ms. Novick/Miss Biancheria/
                   Mayor Petty
                   (October 1, 2015)

To recognize, with gratitude and appreciation, the work of AbbVie in refurbishing the library of Burncoat Middle School, in donating 1,500 new books and 10 new iPads to it, and in improving the teachers' lounge, as part of its Week of Possibilities global volunteering program.

<u>gb #5-231.1</u> - Administration/Mr. Monfredo/Mr. O'Connell/
                   Miss Ramirez/Miss Biancheria/Mayor Petty
                   (October 1, 2015)

To recognize South High Community School for its appearance on the Channel 5 News that highlighted the food pantry and Andy's Attic which assists families in need.

<u>gb #5-255.1</u> - Administration/Miss Biancheria/
                   Miss Ramirez/Mr. Foley/
                   Mr. O'Connell/Mr. Monfredo/Mayor Petty
                   (October 5, 2015)

To recognize Maureen Binienda, Principal of South High Community School, for developing innovative ways to provide healthy food options for students' families.

<u>gb #5-257.1</u> - Administration/Administration
                    (October 6, 2015)

To recognize the following:

- Worcester Senior Center African American Seniors Group who provided school supplies and backpacks to Chandler Magnet and Lincoln Street schools and

- The Spiritually Fabulous Ministries led by Michelle Memnon and supported by fundraiser Anna Whitted for donations of 65 fully supplied backpacks for various grade levels and drawstring bags filled with extra supplies.

IMMEDIATE ACTION (continued)   ACTION

gb #5-239.2 - Administration/Administration
                    (October 5, 2015)

To consider approval of the School Committee's chapter to
be included in the Policy Manual of the Worcester Public
Schools.

gb #5-261 - Administration
                    (September 21, 2015)

To consider input from the School Committee's student
representatives.

VI.   REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

ros #5-11 - Administration
                    (October 6, 2015)

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION EVALUATION REPORT

VII.   COMMUNICATION AND PETITION

c&p #5-7 - Clerk
                    (October 6, 2015)

To consider a communication from the EAW relative to a
request to enter into negotiations over successor collective
bargaining agreements for the following contracts:

        Bus Drivers (Aids to the Physically Handicapped)
        Bus Monitors
        Units A &B
        Instructional Assistants
        Parent Liaisons
        ESL Tutors
        OT/PT Assistants

VIII.   REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE - NONE   ACTION

IX.   PERSONNEL

5-41   The Superintendent has APPROVED the RETIREMENT of the persons named below:

Brady, Suzanne, Liaison, Child Study, effective September 24, 2015

Lussier, Andrea, Teacher, Special Education, effective September 19, 2015

5-42   The Superintendent APPROVED the RESIGNATION of the persons named below:

Weeks, Jesse, Yeacher, Social Studies, South, effective September 28, 2015

5-43   The Superintendent has APPROVED the APPOINTMENT of the persons named below:

Comeau, Karen, Teacher, Special Education, Systemwide, MA, Step 8, $72,283, effective October 5, 2015. Licensed: Speech, Language & Hearing Disorders, All levels.

Simonti, Alicia, Teacher, Science, Forest Grove, MA, Step 1, $50,978, effective September 23, 2015. Licensed: Earth Science 5-8.

X.   GENERAL BUSINESS   ACTION

gb #5-262 - Administration
                 (September 26, 2015)

To set a date to recognize the Alumni Association of North
High School and CSX for donating funds to North High
School for the purchase of a van to transport students to
internships.

gb #5-263 - Mr. Monfredo
                 (September 28, 2015)

Request that the Administration forward a congratulatory
letter to the staff, students and administration at South High
Community School for a well-organized AP Pep Rally.

gb #5-264 - Mr. Monfredo
                 (September 30, 2015)

Request that the Administration inform the schools regarding
the Mass Council for the Social Studies Statewide
Conference entitled "Human & Civil Rights and the Social
Studies" which will take place on Wednesday, October 28th
at the Holiday Inn in Marlborough.

gb #5-265 - Administration
                 (October 1, 2015)

To accept a donation in the amount of $400.00 from Shaw's
Supermarkets Charity Foundation for the Francis J McGrath
Elementary School.

gb #5-266 - Mr. Monfredo
                 (October 2, 2015)

Request that the Administration ask schools to submit their
best practices regarding ways in which to improve school
climate and parent involvement and share them with each
other.

GENERAL BUSINESS (continued)

gb #5-267 - Mr. Monfredo
                   (October 5, 2015)

Request that the School Committee meet with the local legislative body three times during the school year and schedule the first meeting during the month of November.

gb #5-268 - Administration
                   (October 5, 2015)

To accept a donation in the amount of $250.00 from JVE Co., Inc. for the Tatnuck Magnet School.

gb #5-269 - Mr. Foley
                   (October 5, 2015)

Request that the Administration research the opportunities available to Worcester public school students through Unified Theater, an inclusive, student-led creative program that builds relationships and leadership.

gb #5-270 - Administration
                   (October 5, 2015)

To set a date to recognize Tracy O'Connell Novick for being selected to receive MASC's Division IX (Urban) All-State School Committee 2015 award.

gb #5-271 - Mr. O'Connell
                   (October 5, 2015)

To request an update as to progress made to date in contracting for a school security audit for the Worcester Public Schools, pursuant to the Request for Proposals issued in that regard.

gb #5-272 - Administration
                   (October 5, 2015)

To accept a donation in the amount of $5,000.00 from an anonymous donor for the Tatnuck Magnet School.

GENERAL BUSINESS (continued)   ACTION

gb #5-273 - Administration
                 (October 5, 2015)

To accept a donation in the amount of $100.00 from Kathleen M. Toomey for the Tatnuck Magnet School.

gb #5-274 - Administration
                 (October 7, 2015)

To approve a prior fiscal year payment in the amount of $77.63 for mileage reimbursement for a psychologist.

gb #5-275 - Administration
                 (October 7, 2015)

To approve a prior fiscal year payment in the amount of $39.68 for mileage reimbursement for a psychologist.

gb #5-276 - Miss Biancheria
                 (October 7, 2015)

Request that the Administration provide a report on the Recovery High School.

gb #5-277 - Mr. Monfredo
                 (October 7, 2015)

Request that the Administration alert the schools about "Family Literacy Month" in November and attempt to engage families and students in meaningful literacy activities and consider having a "book swap day" during the month.

gb #5-278 - Mayor Petty
                 (October 8, 2015)

Request that the Administration ask the purchasing agent to prepare documents for a Request for Proposal for a search firm for the selection of the next Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools.

GENERAL BUSINESS (continued)   ACTION

gb #5-279 - Mayor Petty
                   (October 8, 2015)

To consider selection of Dr. Marco Rodrigues as Interim
Superintendent of Schools.

gb #5-280 - Mayor Petty
                   (October 8, 2015)

To approve the timeline for the selection of the new
Superintendent of Schools.

gb #5-281-   Administration
                   (October 8, 2015)

Executive session pursuant to Mass. G.L. c. 30A, Section
21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for
negotiations with nonunion personnel and contract
negotiations with nonunion personnel, Superintendent's
Employment Contract.

Executive session pursuant to Mass. G.L. c. 30A, Section
21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for
negotiations with nonunion personnel and contract
negotiations with nonunion personnel, Interim
Superintendent Employment Contract.

XI.   ADJOURNMENT

                        Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
                        Clerk of the School Committee

CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

AGENDA #21A   SUPPLEMENTAL

The School Committee will hold a regular meeting:

on: Thursday, October 15, 2015
at: 6:00 p.m. – Executive Session
       7:00 p.m. – Regular Session
in: Council Chamber, City Hall

<u>ORDER OF BUSINESS</u>   <u>ACTION</u>

I.   <u>CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR MEETING</u>
        <u>INVOCATION</u>
        <u>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/NATIONAL ANTHEM</u>
II.   <u>ROLL CALL</u>
III.   <u>APPROVAL OF RECORDS</u> - NONE
IV.   <u>MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION</u> - NONE
V.   <u>IMMEDIATE ACTION</u> - NONE
VI.   <u>REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT</u> – NONE
VII.   <u>COMMUNICATION AND PETITION</u> - NONE
VIII.   <u>REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES</u> - NONE
IX.   <u>PERSONNEL</u> - NONE

X.   <u>GENERAL BUSINESS</u>

        <u>gb #5-282</u> - Miss Biancheria
                (October 13, 2015)

        To consider selection of Maureen Binienda as Interim
        Superintendent of Schools.

XI.   <u>ADJOURNMENT</u>

                                Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
                                Clerk of the School Committee

EDC Learning transforms lives.

Worcester Public Schools
Alternative Education Evaluation

January 1, 2015

Prepared by Anna McTigue, PhD, and Linda Hirsch, MS
Education Development Center, Inc.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Worcester Public Schools has numerous alternative education models currently in place to support students coming from diverse backgrounds and manifesting a variety of needs. While Worcester's alternative education programming has enjoyed success, the district felt there was a need for a thorough evaluation and review of its alternative education programs, in order to raise the effectiveness of this continuum of services and to increase the number of students who receive its supports and interventions.

Worcester was awarded the *DESE Alternative Education Grant: Education Pathways to Support Students Most At-Risk of Not Graduating from High School* and contracted with Education Development Center, Inc., to evaluate the alternative education models utilized by the district. The goals of the evaluation are to:

- Identify the district's strengths and areas for improvement
- Explore alignment of existing resources
- Provide recommendations for strategic planning for program enhancement

The evaluation will inform the district's strategic plan to coordinate efforts across alternative education models, thereby creating a comprehensive and effective alternative education program for students who require additional support in the Worcester Public Schools.

Methodology

Evaluation work occurred between April and June, 2014. Initial interviews were held with the district administration to establish the priorities for the evaluation and to identify the programs of focus. Programs identified for inclusion in the evaluation were the Gerald Creamer Center (Day, Credit Recovery, and Evening programs), the Challenge Academy, the Reach Academy, the Safety Center and the Transition Program. Interviews with program coordinators and selected faculty, teacher focus groups, and classroom observations occurred in each of the selected school programs (see Appendix A). Because of their close proximity or shared resources, Woodward Day School was also visited and their faculty was interviewed as part of the evaluation although the program is part of the Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative. The Alternative School at St. Casimir's was visited and its Program Coordinator interviewed as the Safety and Transition programs are located in the building and coordinated by the same administrator. However, St. Casmir's was not a program of focus in the review. Student demographic data from March, 2014, were analyzed and compared with the staffing of each program (see Appendix B).

Because the alternative programs in Worcester are designed to prepare youth to meet the Massachusetts graduation standards, the Massachusetts College and Career Readiness Framework's components of Academics (MASSCore), Workplace Readiness, and Personal/Social Development were used to frame the program review.

Additionally, recommendations have been made to support the district's upcoming development of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

Background

Worcester is the second largest city in Massachusetts, and its school system serves approximately 24,500 students. Like many urban districts, the Worcester Public Schools faces challenges created by poverty and high levels of immigration. There is immense commitment on the part of the district to meet those challenges and to provide high quality service to students. The Worcester Compact, part of Superintendent Boone's strategic plan for Worcester Public Schools, is evidence of the high expectations the district has for all students.

The WPS Compact

Delivering on High Expectations and Outstanding Results for All Students

100 percent of students will be guaranteed a rigorous core curriculum resulting in measurable gains in student learning

Milestones for College and Career Readiness

A 50 percent reduction in the proficiency gap in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science & Technology/Engineering by 2016-17

- In ELA, a CPI of 88.1 by 2016-17
- In Mathematics, a CPI of 83.7 by 2016-17
- In Science & Technology/Engineering, a CPI of 80.8 by 2016-17

Increase the WPS graduation rate to 90 percent over 4 years or 95 percent over 5 years by 2016-17

A 50 percent reduction in the annual dropout rate to 1.9 percent by 2016-17

100 percent of graduates will successfully complete high school coursework that prepares them for both college and career

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The Worcester Compact is a commendable vision, and the district has worked hard to provide multiple pathways for youth to achieve graduation. While this work has been visionary, supporting *all* students with a guaranteed curriculum is now mandatory with the enactment of the 2012 legislation, MGL Chapter 222 (37H3/4).

Alternative programs are important pathways to graduation for students in the district who need a different venue from the comprehensive schools. In effective alternative education options, the programs are small in size, have flexible schedules and structures, and have teaching faculty that connect with students and adjust their

instructional approaches to meet their students' learning needs.[1] In addition to providing an alternative learning opportunity for the students in Worcester, alternative education is critical to the district because it provides a space where new ideas and techniques can be piloted.

Superintendent Boone advocates that alternative education in the Worcester Public Schools not become a "dumping ground with sub-par instruction"[2] for students who struggle, but instead be a different pathway with rigorous instruction and support that is tailored to student needs. The district has shown its commitment by contracting with EDC to provide an evaluation of its alternative programs to inform a realignment of these offerings that will best meet the needs of the students. Worcester's vision of a set of programs that combine academic rigor with the welcoming and flexible approaches of alternative schools is commendable. Additionally, the district is using this evaluation to inform planning as it moves to the development of a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) and its organizational framework. This second goal of the evaluation creates an imperative to look at the practices in both comprehensive and alternative programs and to support those that work for all children in the district as they are prepared for college and career.

Organization of the Report

Findings are presented below across the following sections:

- District Organization
- Staffing
- Resources, Professional Practice, and Professional Development

Recommendations are presented following each section.

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[1] *Alternative Education: Exploring Innovations in Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, 2014), 3.

[2] Melinda Boone, remarks at panel discussion, "*Discovering Alternative Education: An Examination of Innovation in Learning,*" Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, Boston, June 10, 2014.

District Organization

District Level Collaboration and Support

Worcester Public Schools already recognizes that the alternative education programs are part of the system as a whole and are not separate entities. There is accountability to provide a strong alternative education aligned with district standards as students in alternative programs graduate from their home high schools. District leadership is needed to enhance the coordination between the alternative programs and the comprehensive schools, ensure smooth referral and reconsideration processes, ensure that the alternative programs have the same rigorous curricula as the comprehensive schools and make sure that an appropriate proportion of district resources are allocated to the alternative programs.

Cross-departmental collaboration at the district level is evident. The district leadership team meets weekly and it is clear that the district mission is to provide a rigorous education for *all* students in Worcester. To address the academic and social needs of all Worcester students, there is the intent to adopt district-wide goals that include shared planning and ownership of the outcomes for all students. In a conversation with the evaluator, the district superintendent and the chief academic officer spoke of their goal to develop a multi-tier system of support (MTSS) in the upcoming year, and they explained how using this preventive framework would help establish higher rigor and expectations across the district for the delivery of coordinated supports.

High school principals and alternative program coordinators have a monthly forum at which goals and district initiatives are discussed. The program coordinators who were interviewed referenced the forum. While the forum seems to be appreciated, it was mentioned that sometimes the discussion is not relevant to the alternative programs, and that the alternative coordinators can seldom attend anyway because they cannot leave their buildings for safety reasons. As two district coordinators said, "The district is very conventional: meetings are on school days or after school. [The attendance consists of] 45 principals in meetings."

Program coordinators also brought up issues specific to their alternative settings. They expressed a wish for problem-solving conversations and support around many of these issues, which are mentioned in more detail later in this report. Two of their highest priorities seemed to be (1) support with the process of referrals to the programs and (2) support for the seemingly increasing number of students with behavioral issues that are being referred, both with and without Individualized Education Plans with goals for behavior.

Additionally, each program coordinator mentioned independently that collaboration with other coordinators would be helpful in addressing issues that are unique to alternative programs. Currently there is no structured time to support this kind of collaboration and problem solving. "We need specialized meetings and relevant PD,"

said one coordinator. Another commented, "To sit down and *talk about referrals would be really* helpful—as coordinators first to define the problem, and then with principals [middle school and high school]."

While there is no formal collaborative planning between the district and the alternative school coordinators, program faculty spoke frequently about the supports available to them from the district. The chief academic officer, Dr. Rodrigues, was frequently mentioned as a support to the programs, especially in helping them troubleshoot ways to provide consistent services to students in the district. Several coordinators spoke about the special education liaisons and team chairs, the ELL liaisons, the school safety liaison, and the transportation office as being very supportive and accessible. Support with curriculum and instruction was also appreciated, as many of the programs that traditionally had no curriculum materials now have received textbooks and other curricular materials. However, there were still supports that were desired, such as more intense collaboration with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction around curriculum and scope and sequence. As one coordinator said, "We have a scope and sequence but not everyone follows this (in our school or in the sending schools)."

It was noted by faculty in almost every program that the coordinators (Tim Whalen and Michael O'Neil in particular) are critical to their programs' long-term establishment and success. As part of the district plan it will be important to ensure that long-term strategy include transition plans for the leadership of these programs.

It was also noted by both faculty and program coordinators that having programmatic responsibilities in multiple buildings was an enormous responsibility and sometimes very challenging. Supporting extra programs while also supporting faculty and students is a high priority but sometimes posed conflict, as stated by one person: "My first priority is here in this building, but if the assistance principal at Challenge/Reach is sick I have to go cover. I don't have an assistant principal here; I have a lead teacher. It would be nice to have another support. The kids are so needy. The greatest thing for me is to strengthen the program: I need great teachers and I need to support these great teachers so they don't burn out."

Collaboration with Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative (CMSEC)

The CMSEC provides educational, clinical, and therapeutic services to children, grades K–12, for school districts in central Massachusetts. The Worcester Public School district has a long history of collaboration with the CMSEC. CMSEC is undergoing a complete redesign of its programs as well as a network resource redesign. They are just starting to define their district-specific objectives and the initiatives they will be putting in place to support them. They are trying to get administrators to understand some of the initiatives in which schools are going to be participating. As part of this redesign, they have asked for *one* site to serve all their populations. One space will provide the luxury of programmatic planning to create flexible and safe programming options. This would allow for many resources (e.g., a gym and science labs). They additionally hope to be able to respond to districts needing educational services for students who have been

suspended, now that under Chapter 222 (37H3/4) a district is required to provide an education even during out of school time due to suspension or expulsion.

As the executive director of CMSEC said, "We have to be clear about what we do and whom we serve. We also need to have a sense of who the population is that districts need support in serving." It was mentioned that Woodward Day is different from other programs: it is an interim alternative placement, in which the goal is to have the students receive the same rigor and access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). Programmatic infrastructure for progress monitoring and data-based decision making is being developed.

Recommendations for District Organization

Organization and Communication
As Worcester Public Schools moves to an MTSS for its organizational framework, district administration will need to provide guidance and clarity to schools on issues of curriculum (both academic content and social-emotional leaning (SEL)) and interventions (Tiers 2 and 3). Comprehensive district support will be needed to align Tier 1 curriculum to district scope and sequence and to Tier 2 and 3 interventions within and across programs.

Collaboration at the district level between special education and alternative education is necessary to troubleshoot appropriate procedures for students who are being referred to special education and need a safe placement during the referral time period.

Collaboration with Program Coordinators and District Leadership
It is necessary to establish a systemic approach to strategic planning for the alternative programs in Worcester. A representative planning group is advised. The group should include all alternative program coordinators as well as representatives from district departments (School Safety, Special Education, English Language Learners and Supplemental Support Services, data and progress monitoring, curriculum and instruction). Inclusion of principals representing comprehensive schools is highly recommended as well.

There is need for systemic communication (1) with district leadership, (2) across alternative programs, (3) between all schools and alternative programs, and (4) with partnering agencies (such as the CMSEC, JRC, etc.). Topics in need of focused attention are: Referral and reintegration to and from alternative programs, intervention techniques and leadership support and learning.

Leadership Development and Capacity Building
Leadership development should be incorporated into the alternative program strategic planning for long-term success of the current programs. As the program coordinators of the key programs for the district come closer to retirement age, a strategic plan for

transition and capacity building is critical to ensure smooth transitions and continuity of service.

Collaboration with Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative (CMSEC)
Continue the ongoing communication with CMSEC with the intent of aligning practices and expectations as they undergo their strategic realignment. This will ensure consistency in expectations, academic resourcing, and alignment of practices in critical areas.

Program Design, Referral Criteria and Process

Worcester Public Schools will be moving to adopt Multi-Tiered Systems of Support as the organizational framework for the district's service provision. It will be important for all sending schools to understand the intended design of each alternative program, the students they serve, and a clear process of referral. This will be particularly important with the implementation of legislation (MGL 222(37H3/4)) as schools in the district will be pressed to provide an education for students who have been suspended.

A program should have (1) a design that is complete and makes sense for the types of students the program is supposed to serve, and (2) a design that is communicated effectively both inside and outside the program. This means that the design must be documented clearly, and that it must be easy for people to find the document and any essential contact information.

Alternative programs and their students benefit from clear guidelines and criterion for referral to alternative education. This process serves to guide comprehensive programs as they make decisions regarding what alternative programs to choose. It also ensures that the student receives an appropriate intervention prior to referral and that an appropriate plan is developed once he or she enters an alternative education program. Data collected during a well-structured referral process can also inform the intentional design and flexible structures used in the alternative program to meet the need of the students. This information will provide a foundation for the development of a student success plan with an exit criteria/protocol for each entering student.

The following section provides an overview of both the design and the referral process for each of the programs under review.

Safety Center

Design
Created in 1999 by Worcester Public Schools and community stakeholders in response to school shootings both nationally and in Worcester, the Safety Center is designed to serve general education students who need a focused assessment and a concrete plan for support. Students are referred to the center in lieu of suspension for critical incidents. Rarely are students taken if they have hit or fought—the district's goal is to get students into the center before these incidents occur. The Safety Center provides a

three-day assessment period that allows for school adjustment counselors at the program to complete a full home assessment, a student assessment, and the development of a plan for the child.

There is no transportation to the Safety Center, so parents must bring a child there in the morning. There are two buses in the afternoon that take students to different parts of the city.

Referral

There is a very well designed process for referral to, and exit from, the program. There is a clearly written referral form for the Safety Center and a very well defined assessment that schools must fill out in order to refer a child. Principals consult with program staff and a district Manager before students are sent to the program. It was felt by program staff that it was important to be clear about referral criteria with sending schools—and also with the referred students. In general, referrals to the center have been appropriate.

The Safety Center experiences challenges in the referral process as well. Right now there is a waiting list for the Safety Center of up to a week. This is perceived as a problem, as it is most impactful to get a child involved in the assessment process right away after a crucial incident (i.e., within 24 hours). Additionally, faculty at sending schools feel that the referred students are dangerous (to self or others) and need immediate attention.

After three days, an exit meeting is held with family, the sending school's principal, and other key players. A narrative of recommendations is provided. The length of stay can be a challenge in the case where a student needs a little longer than three days, as the program does not have the staff for this. It was noted that it was nice to have the Transition Program in the same building as the Safety Center. When students need a more comprehensive plan than can be put into place during the Safety Center's usual three-day evaluation, a student can be in the Transition Program while such a plan is made, although this is also a challenge to the Transition Program.

Transition Program

Design

The Transition Program has a clear program description. Developed approximately 10 years ago, this program provides a short-term stay of approximately 10 days for students in grades 7–12 when the district needs time to determine out the appropriate placements for them. Examples of appropriate referrals are students who arrive at the district with no records or students who were involved in multiple agencies, including those coming from specialized foster care or recent immigrants with a sponsoring agency involved.

Referral

Strengths of the referral process to the Transition Program are that the eligibility criteria, referral procedures, and exiting procedures are clearly defined and documented. Students must be approved before coming to the Transition Center. They have to be enrolled in a Worcester school first and a referral form must be completed and be accepted by a designated Manager. The Transition Center referral form is being revised for next year to include special education and English proficiency level for more informed decision-making regarding a child's acceptance and ultimate placement.

The evaluation also identified some challenges in the Transition Program's referral process, caused by several trends regarding the student population in Worcester. First, the program staff reported the student population has changed from "streetwise" to having more mental health needs. The program is receiving many more referrals for students who have IEPs. This trend has the potential to create a capacity issue, as the program has been hitting full capacity for students with IEPs more frequently, getting to the legal limit of eight students with IEPs to one teacher.

A second challenge is the increasing number of students who stay longer than the program is designed to have them. This seems to be happening for several reasons. Students who are suspended long-term may sometimes be placed in the Transition Program while the school committee meets to decide on their placement. This has had some students staying beyond the allotted 10-day timeframe (i.e., between 14 and 22 days). It takes time for the letters to be written and signed, for the intake, and for the actual placement in the target program. Students also may stay in the Transition Program longer than usual if they arrive at the district with no records. The Transition Program does not want to set students up with the wrong programs or services, but it needs support and time to get the appropriate information. Often these are students who are being located in Worcester through other agencies with social services and subsidized housing for recent immigrants.

A third challenging trend is the number of students being referred who are already in special education and receiving services. This is a complex issue, and the program faculty is working with the Manager of Special Education and Intervention Services to address it. Students are coming with great need for mental health services. They are already in Structured Therapeutic Educational Programs (STEP), but those programs are not meeting the student needs. The students are initially referred to the Safety Center, but if they need more than three days and are not safe to return, the sending schools want them to stay at the Transition Program. Student like this need more intense services than the Transition Program is designed to provide at this time and are trending to more restrictive placements rather than returning to their sending schools (See Appendix C).

Challenge Academy

Design

The challenge program is in its second year of operation. It was created for seventh and eighth graders who are currently performing significantly below grade level who do not have an identified disability but need additional social and emotional support. The evaluator was not able to obtain a program description other than the district flyer. It should be noted that there are relatively few alternative programs for middle grades students in Massachusetts.

Referral

The Challenge Academy does have a basic referral form. The referral asks for basic contact information, a basic transcript, medical information, and agency involvement, but there is no place on the referral form for IEP status or English proficiency level. Additionally, there is no place for the reason for referral or any intervention work that occurred in the sending program. New students can be referred at any time of year. The goal of the program is to send students back to their home middle schools or high schools, but there was no mention of a formal reintegration process for students into their home schools.

There were quite a few issues identified with the current Challenge Academy referral process. First the program is receiving the students that the program was not designed to serve. The program was meant for students performing significantly below grade level and who are in need of social/emotional support who do not have an identified disability. However, currently it is not clear what the learning needs of these students might be, which has important implications for staffing and program design. According to program data, approximately 17% arrive with IEPs and 9% formerly had I.E.Ps. Also, teachers felt that many of the students are getting sent from their sending schools for behavioral reasons. All teachers interviewed mentioned that the students getting referred to the program are not what they are prepared to work with. It will be important to document and monitor the student referral data to ensure that the students that ultimately go to the Challenge Academy fit its intentional design and that staffing is adequate to meet the student needs. As one teacher stated, "If we get special ed. students, we need more than one special ed. teacher twice a week."

Second, the quality of referral process is uneven. Many students arrive with insufficient paperwork or undiagnosed needs. Faculty and administration felt that there was a "miscommunication about how to get kids into the school" and described how students were arriving with "15 pages of discipline with no FBAs (Functional Behavioral Assessments) or special education referrals from sending schools." It was also mentioned that students coming with IEPs are not having transitional meetings.

Reach Academy

Design

The Reach Academy is designed for students in grades 9–10 who are over-age, under-credited, and need additional academic, social, or emotional support. The evaluator was not able to obtain a program description other than the district flyer. Students who attend Reach, upon obtaining 10 high school credits, can transfer to the Creamer Center or return to their respective comprehensive high schools.

Referral

The evaluator was not able to access the Reach Academy referral form. It was noted that many students in the Challenge program continue on in the Reach program when they come of age. The high school has about 60 students enrolled and an attendance of about 40 per day. Traditionally, Reach students were older and under-credited. This year the program has first year ninth graders that had behavior issues in their sending high schools. Faculty is finding that it takes a full year to get students settled in the program and transferred to the Creamer Center. Additionally, faculty felt that the older students were easier to inspire and get on track.

Creamer Center Day Program

Design

The evaluator was not able to obtain a program description other than the district flyer. The program is designed for students aged 16–21 in the eleventh and twelfth grades who have at least 10 high school credits. Because the Day Program is in the same building as the Credit Recovery and Evening programs, program staff has the ability to create a very flexible and responsive plan for students that fits their needs and life demands. This flexibility will be discussed later in this report. The program is semester-based to provide more opportunities for a student to earn credits in a year to stay on track. The program has a dedicated focus to catch students up and get them to graduate. Transition back to home schools or to other programs is not a major priority.

The program has a solid record of graduating students. When someone graduates, he or she is listed as a graduate of the home school. The student profile is very diverse and similar for both the day and evening programs. Some students have IEPs with Learning Disabilities (LD) or inclusion in their educational plan, but the program is not currently staffed to serve special needs other than these. Sometimes the program takes students for safety reasons. They have split students in rival gangs between the day and evening programs, so that students can come and not have conflict. Large percentages have lost ground educationally because of major attendance issues. 85% experience homelessness. Most ELL students are proficient at levels 4 and 5, while five of them are level 3. Day school students were reported to be more focused than evening students.

It was mentioned by the program coordinator that principals in the district are asking for more and more help with students who are having difficulty in the comprehensive schools. Problems include trauma, neglect, drugs, and homelessness.

Referral

The evaluator was not able to obtain a referral form for the Day Program, but there is an established criterion that a student must have at least 10 high school credits to be referred. The referral process includes a well-defined individualized planning form that each student fills out with the support of guidance or a lead teacher.

Credit Recovery and Creamer Evening Programs

The evaluator was not able to obtain a program description for the Credit Recovery Program other than the district flyer. The program is designed for students in grades 9–12 who are over-age and under-credited, and it gives them targeted math and literacy support in small groups. There is academic support in the four major content areas, with a commitment on the part of the faculty to address how the learner fell behind and to support him or her to be successful.

The evaluator was not able to obtain a program description for Creamer Evening Program other than the district flyer. The Creamer Evening Program is designed for students aged 16–21 in the eleventh & twelfth grades who cannot attend the Day Program for life reasons and have at least 10 high school credits. The Evening Program is similar in student profile to the Day Program, but faculty mentioned that the programming is a bit less focused and disciplined than the day programming. Drug use among students in both programs was reported as an issue.

The Credit Recovery and Evening programs run at the same time. The two programs have a slightly different student profile. Students in grades 10–12 who have failed in comprehensive high schools tend to come to the Evening Program and do well. Many of these students are successful as long as there are enough staff to meet their needs. Eighty percent of students are classified as homeless, and approximately 10% have special needs identified. Many more have disabilities, but they have dropped out of school and signed out of special education. The special education teacher and school adjustment counselor go through the cumulative folders and identify the students who used to receive services. This helps to get the needed supports. The ninth grade over-aged students—one-third of whom have zero credits—are students whom the faculty feels have fallen through the cracks. Some have repeated ninth grade two or three times before coming to the program. Many have home issues, some are homeless; many are ELLs, not just immigrants but long term ELL. A problem identified by faculty in the Evening Program is that students who are only at school in the evening may be on the streets until 3:00 when the program starts. It was not felt that an evening program was a good choice for young people (i.e. ninth graders) unless they had a reason such as a day job. For those students who have failed and are not working, it was felt they need additional structure and support of school.

Additionally, faculty felt that at times mixing students with different profiles in the same program was counterproductive. Faculty reported that students already involved in the juvenile justice system seem to have a corrupting influence on students who are struggling and are not involved with the juvenile system. .

Woodward Day School (CMSEC)

Design

The Woodward Day School program is designed for students both with and without disabilities who have been excluded from school under MGL 37H or a pending felony charge under MGL 37H1/2. Weapons, drugs, significant fights, teacher assault, pending felony charges, and sometimes a 45-day evaluation period to decide on placement are reasons students are referred to the Woodward program. (The sending school actually performs the evaluations).

Woodward has a well-defined program description and student handbook. The student-to-staff ratio is designed at 8:1 with a well-defined behavior management system. There is a four-week summer session that can be used to "buy back" credits for courses that have been failed.

Referral and Reconsideration

The referral process to Woodward Day School has both a structured intake and reconsideration (exit) process that involves interviews with sending school administration. The student profile at Woodward Day seems to be changing. In the past, the program had a lot of general education students who needed more support and a smaller class size. There has been a significant increase recently (over half) in middle school and special education student referrals. Predominant special education categories are specific learning disabilities, social-emotional disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and ADHD.

There is an established reconsideration meeting at the end of a student's stay at Woodward. The program attempts to transition students in a sensible manner (at the end of a semester or a year). Administration mentioned that it was difficult to get students integrated back into the home schools at times. The students frequently do well in such a supervised program, where strong relationships with faculty and diversified supports provided students with a successful learning environment. At reconsideration meetings it was identified that some principals are more forgiving and open than others to integrating the student back into the comprehensive school. Additionally, it was identified that there are not programs to reintegrate students back in their home schools in any of the high schools (although historically such programs existed). All high schools have STEP classrooms, but the population and curriculum don't always match.

Recommendations for Program Design, Referral Criteria and Process

As the district moves toward adopting MTSS as its organizational framework, explicit program design and defined referral processes will need to be established. Intentional design (i.e., design based on knowing who the students are and what needs they have) is a requirement for any successful program. In Worcester, those alternative programs that had a clearly defined program and referral process were more able to screen student referrals accurately, design appropriate support structures, and protect the integrity of the program and its intended design.

Having a robust referral form and process also allowed programs to identify trends that challenged their programming as currently designed and staffed. The programs that are the most negatively impacted (Challenge in particular) are seemingly receiving students who are not the intended profile for the design of the program and current staffing (for more on staffing see next section). Additionally, programs that are in high demand (i.e., Challenge and the Transition Program) are impacted when the profile and number of students do not meet the design and staffing of the program. It will be important in the next year to monitor the referral trends. It is possible that more students will be referred to these programs due to upcoming changes in legislation (MGL 222 37 ¾) that will put pressure on schools to provide students with an appropriate education during suspension. It is with this in mind that the following recommendations are made:

- Make sure that all programs have very clearly defined program descriptions, criteria, referral processes, referral forms, and exit criteria and procedures that allow programs to screen students accurately to ensure appropriate placement. Clear designs and referral processes will ensure that students will not be accepted into programs that were not intended to help them. Clear exit criteria will ensure that students do not remain in programs longer than needed.
- Include a district-level review component in the referral process for each program. This step will add a major support for program coordinators. Establishment of a "gatekeeper function" at the district level will additionally ensure that students are being referred in an appropriate manner.
- Develop a clear and detailed referral form for all alternative programs, asking for sending school intervention and detailed student profiles. Collecting these data would not only enable better planning for each referred student, but it would also allow the district to monitor the students who are being referred and to plan for appropriate staffing, development, or expansion of programming.
- Create a clear intake process for students and their families to orient them to the goals and expectations of the program. As part of this process, create a multi-disciplinary team that is charged with developing success plans for students as part of their referral to their new programs.
- Incorporate a Student Support Process (SSP) as a formal part of the referral to all alternative programs. Documentation of intervention approaches that were implemented should be part of the referral process.[3]
- Closely monitor the referral data to ensure that the program designs meet the true needs of students who are referred to the program. It is possible that there may not be enough places in existing programs for students with certain needs (IEPs, mental health, etc.). Long-term monitoring will inform where resources may need to be reallocated across programs, or where programs may need to be redesigned to accommodate additional needs.

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[3] *Alternative Education*, 9.

Staffing

Research indicates that one characteristic of effective alternative education is a set of clearly identified goals with high expectations for social-emotional, behavioral, and academic growth.[4] It is important that staffing is appropriate to the design of the individual program and is able to address the current student needs. Additionally, it is important that the faculty have the necessary curriculum and tools to work with a program specific student population. Finally, as the district moves to develop a MTSS as the organizational framework, it is important to establish processes for faculty to reflect on their work, implement appropriate interventions, monitor the progress their students are making, and plan in a proactive timeframe.

This section outlines the strengths and the challenges identified by the evaluator, faculty, and coordinators for each of the programs included in this review, regarding the capacity of present staffing to provide students with an academically rigorous experience and appropriate social-emotional support.

Safety Center

The allocation of two school adjustment counselors and one special educator is appropriate to the program's current needs. However, higher numbers of special education students are being referred to the program, and at times, students require more than the three allocated days for evaluation. As mentioned above, these trends could create a challenge if the ratio of students with disabilities to staff exceeds the 8:1 that is stipulated by special education regulations (Appendix C).

Additionally, while the Safety Center has a small number of students at any given time, the evaluation work in this program is ongoing, time-consuming, and labor-intensive. It was mentioned by program staff, "people [outside the program] feel we are heavy on the counseling staff, but the need here is 100 percent all day long. We have on-going interviews, intakes, and exits, with new students cycling in at all times. " Follow-up occurs one month and six months after each student has left the program, performed by the student adjustment counselor. There was a wish on the part of the school adjustment counselors for clerical staff or support from the sending school for some of the logistical work (i.e., paper work and follow-up). This support would allow clinical staff to maximize the time spent using clinical expertise in their work with students.

Transition Program

The school adjustment counselors of the Safety Center also serve the Transition Program. There is one special education teacher, who has past experience at a comprehensive high school with students who have emotional and behavioral challenges and is familiar with the needs of the student population at the Transition Program. As mentioned above, more students with disabilities have been referred to

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[4] *Alternative Education*, 17.

the program and there are frequently eight of them in the program at the same time. This will become an issue if the trend continues and exceeds the 1:8 ratio of special educator to special education students in a class. Additional staffing, either another special educator or a para-professional, would be needed.

Additionally, program staff felt that they could expand the program with an evening component if they had more staff members.

Challenge Academy

The faculty at the Challenge Academy is committed to its students and reported trying very hard to create a good environment in which students can learn. Teachers are highly qualified in their content areas and have had prior experience in comprehensive schools. They understand the district scope and sequence. Additionally, it was felt that faculty had a good collegial working environment. Teachers identified that they had adequate prep time—one period per day.

Yet there are issues about how the current staffing and scheduling of the Challenge Academy meets the critical needs of the current student population. First, the program is currently structured much like a comprehensive middle school with traditional school hours. This structure poses a challenge to providing flexible and adaptable programming, for if all teachers are providing content instruction all day long, there is no time for intervention or credit recovery efforts. Second, the Challenge program is short-staffed if it is to provide a rigorous academic experience in all areas with highly qualified teachers. At full staff, the middle school program has four full-time teachers. This year they are missing a history teacher, and last year they were missing both history and science. The ideal class size for Challenge is 7–8 students; the present size is 11–12. Last year the students took three classes with teachers and two classes online. This year there is a science teacher, so only history is studied online, using PLATO. This way of learning history was reported not to have worked well, as online learning requires a certain amount of student effort, and there were not enough faculty to keep students focused on the online content. The special educator is only at the Challenge and Reach programs two days per week altogether. In the Challenge Academy there are up to 10 students who have IEPs. Other than teachers, the only faculty for both the middle and high school programs (70–80 kids) are Assistant Principal Jeff Creamer and one school adjustment counselor.

Tiered behavioral supports are warranted, but the current staffing and schedule makes it difficult to build in systemic supports such as after-school credit recovery, behavioral intervention such as a "time out" space, or an alternative classroom that could be used if a child needs to work outside of the classroom or is serving an in-house suspension.

Reach Academy

The Reach Academy has four teachers. The program rotates students in three groups through the four teachers to provide prep time for teachers. Because the program is a five-period day with four classes, students sometimes get two periods of the same content area in a day (e.g., English twice on Monday, math twice on Tuesday). PLATO is used for credit

recovery, and some students receive art credit (one time per week). The most students can get is five credits per semester.

It was reported by the program coordinator and several faculty that the strength of this alternative high school program is the strong teachers who really like the students they work with and work hard to support them. The students feel safe in the program.

A challenge is that the special education support is limited due to the intense needs of the students in the Challenge program. With one part-time special educator assigned to both programs, the needs of the younger students tend to be prioritized over those of the high school students.

Creamer Center Day Program

The Creamer Day Program is appropriately staffed for academic support of students, with teams of content teachers that can meet most of their needs. In addition, five or six staff members have masters' degrees in education with an administrative focus from Worcester State, which provides distributed leadership abilities in the building. Because the Creamer Center has enough faculty and has programming that spans day to evening, the program can provide flexible programming to students. One example is "buy-back time," in which students can make up absences during evenings or vacations. Use of staff flex time makes this possible—one teacher comes in late and stays late for buy-back time.

Critical support staff is part-time (shared with other programs) and therefore not always available to students. The guidance counselor is available two days a week, and the nurse, physical therapist, and the special educator for inclusion services are there three days a week. Faculty and students did know when the special educator would be in the building; however, there was confusion about when other support staff would be there.

A final challenge was the lack of technical education available to the students. As one program coordinator said, "Technical education is a real need for these students. Programs that support hands-on real pathways for them are vital. We don't have that here."

Creamer Center Credit Recovery and Evening Programs

The Credit Recovery and Evening programs run four hours a day for four days a week. The programs use the same staff as the Day Program and pay them a $30/hour stipend for night work. One reported strength of the Evening and Credit Recovery programs was that the staff was very understanding and provided a laid-back environment. All teachers mentioned that Tim Whalen, the program coordinator, is very supportive and responsive to their requests. Additionally, they reported having access to valuable tools and that it was beneficial to have the day staff as instructors. Having a special educator available was also considered a vital support, as there are a lot of diverse learning needs amongst the student population.

Reported staffing challenges included the perception that the evening program was harder to teach in, because there is not as much support for discipline and there is no prep time. As one teacher said, "The evening school is a different animal than the day

school. There is less discussion and strategizing in the evening academic program. I have to prep in the morning. There is no prep time in the evening." It should also be noted that all teachers in the night program have worked all day—they are tired by the time the evening programing starts.

Woodward Day School (CMSEC)

The Woodward Day School is currently situated in three sites. Each building has five teachers, each assistant director is a certified special educator, and some of the teachers are certified in special education as well as their content areas. There is an itinerant technology teacher on staff. He works with students on a rotating basis. There are also itinerant art and music teachers. A guidance counselor is in each building twice a week. There are also special educators and clinical staff at the Woodward Program. Currently the guidance counselor tries to split time equitably. She runs groups (e.g., anger management, CCR-related activities, job prep). She also keeps all transcripts up to date, contacts parents, and makes referrals to outside agencies for support services, which leaves little time for individualized clinical support. Next year they will add a clinician who will provide individualized behavior support to students. The program can have up to 120 students in all three sites. Many of the students go back to their schools in the spring. It was reported that the program is supported with consistent staff and that the flux in numbers of students is to be expected given the nature of the program.

Recommendations for Staffing

A careful look at the demographics and learning needs of students in each program is warranted. An analysis of the needed supports will help the district allocate appropriate teaching faculty, ensure adequate staffing for clinical intervention and specialists, and plan strategically for future programming. To this end:
- Closely monitor the referral data to the Safety Center and Transition Program as well as the Challenge and Reach Academies.
- Use these data to ensure:
  - That if the number of students with disabilities increases, appropriate staffing is in place to ensure that a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is available to everyone.
  - That the appropriate interventions are in place as the district develops a Multi-tiered System of Support.

With the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) it is imperative that programs are staffed with teachers who have content expertise but also the additional skills to address the needs of students in an alternative setting. In larger programs with more teachers (e.g., the Creamer Center) there is the ability to use faculty in a flexible manner (e.g. using flex time to staff an evening program so faculty is not so tired when getting to the program, or sharing a special educator across day and evening). In lieu of organizing classrooms by behavior (seen in several programs), it would be worth reorganizing

students into groups based on their academic learning needs to allow for continuity in instruction.[5]

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[5] See the Lowell Case Study in *Alternative Education*, 10.

Resources, Professional Practice, and Professional Development

As Worcester Public Schools works toward the development of MTSS, it will be critical to integrate efforts in the areas of RTI and PBIS to develop a robust and systemic MTSS framework for both academic and behavioral multi-level prevention and intervention. The district will need to operationalize the MTSS framework through systemic infrastructure and professional development offerings (e.g., inclusive instructional practices at each tier, collaborative teaming models, using data, curriculum use/applications, etc.). Additionally, the district will need to develop or adopt a self-assessment protocol that is completed yearly to monitor school and district-wide implementation of the model, and to restructure professional development and coaching supports in order to address the areas in need of refinement and development.

Alternative programs play an important role in an organizational framework such as MTSS. A clear understanding of how the programs are designed and implemented and their alignment with tiered supports is critical. The present section will address, in each of the reviewed alternative programs, the resources, professional practices, and professional development that will be of importance to support a robust MTSS framework.

Resources

In MTSS, critical resources must be in place in order to support high quality academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction and progress monitoring. Academic and social-emotional learning curricula, appropriate screeners, credit recovery and progress monitoring tools with the necessary technology to support their use, and career-oriented programing are important resources to have established to support students in alternative programs.

Academic Curriculum

Academic curriculum is not necessary at the Safety Center because of the short-term nature of its three-day program. Academic work comes from the sending school. The Transition Program is resourced with the texts used in the Worcester Public Schools. The program has an MCAS review curriculum as well, but students go to their home school to take the MCAS (or sometimes a school sends a teacher to the Transition Program to proctor the MCAS). There are challenges to this model, as the sending school is supposed to send academic work, but staff reported that this is not always easy to obtain. Additionally, staff in both the Transition Program and the Safety Center find it difficult to know what students are doing in their comprehensive schools. This becomes a real issue if the student stays longer than the three days of the Safety Center program.

Teachers in the Challenge and Reach programs had access to the general education curriculum materials and were familiar with the scope and sequence of their content

areas. The English teacher at the Challenge program reported wishing for additional leveled materials to support differentiation for the range of learners in her classes. The math teacher at the Challenge program had all the student *Connected Mathematics Project* (CMP) booklets but did not have the teacher edition of the texts for CMP, nor did he receive implementation training. CMP is a very complex curriculum with wonderful activities, but they are all in the teacher's guide; the student booklets do not have the vital information that is needed if the curriculum is to be used with fidelity. Additionally, the necessary supplementary/accommodation materials were not in the classroom (materials like manipulatives, etc.). Because of a staffing shortage this year, PLATO is being used as a curriculum in history. It was not clear how well the use of this program addresses the Massachusetts Framework Standards.

The Creamer Day, Credit Recovery and Evening programs all have teachers who are highly qualified in their content areas. The three programs are resourced with the texts used in the Worcester Public Schools. PLATO, while primarily used for credit recovery in these programs, is used for content instruction if it a more flexible option is needed. It was mentioned by teachers and the program coordinator that the school's science curriculum could be enhanced if they had science labs that would allow for engaging hands-on lab work.

The Woodward Day School (CMSEC) program is very focused on meeting the needs of the students. Teachers were reported by administration as being proficient in their content instruction. They have textbooks, access to a computer lab, Internet, and wireless. Teachers have classrooms organized for supporting student behaviors, not necessarily academic skills. Some classrooms have seventh through twelfth graders in them at all academic levels. While the class sizes are small, the span of academic levels in some classes requires significant planning and differentiation.

Credit Recovery Tools

At the middle and high school levels, credit recovery is one option of tiered intervention. The tools used for credit recovery varied in the programs reviewed. The Challenge and Reach programs had PLATO available, yet there is no additional time in the day for credit recovery, as all students had course schedules filled with face-to-face instruction. The Creamer Center Day and Credit Recovery programs use PLATO for credit recovery. Students can use the program after school to "buy back" credit if they missed class or were absent or recover credit (catch up) if they were under-credited. The Woodward Day program will be using a new tool in the near future. This year the CMSEC purchased Edgenuity, an online suite of courses that includes instruction, tools, readings, assignments, and multimedia resources, with embedded scaffolds to help students. Teachers are just learning to use it and implement it in their coursework. Teachers are invested in using it but would benefit from being shown how to do so in a robust manner. More oversight is needed on the use of Edgenuity by students. A pilot was run with one student who had some significant safety issues and had been using a computer to work from home. She is bright and motivated. The program hopes to use Edgenuity for credit recovery.

Social-emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum

The SEL curriculum at the Safety Center is focused on a review of Worcester school rules and on anger management skills. Stabilization and planning for social-emotional support is the goal of the three days—academic progress is not a focus of the program. The Transition Program uses similar curricula as the Safety Center. There was no formal SEL curriculum in place for the Challenge and Reach programs. It was mentioned by staff that social skill development is a necessary focus for the programs and not currently in the curriculum. Additionally, it was mentioned by program administrators and faculty that professional development and materials for the social-emotional support of students are necessary and would be appreciated. The Creamer Center did not have an SEL curriculum. The Woodward Day program did not have a formal SEL curriculum but used their point system and class meetings to reinforce appropriate behaviors.

Technology

Proficient use of technology is a vital 21st century skill with which all students should graduate. Given the student population's access to technology (or lack of such access) outside of school, it is important that students learn how to use it in school. There was a dearth of technology in all of the programs reviewed. The Challenge and Reach programs had few computers and not in every classroom. Creamer Day and Evening had just received new computers. Faculty were thrilled and had just started to put them into use.

The Woodward Day School at CMSEC did have computers in a computer lab. A computer instructor taught a technology course in isolation from other content areas. It is a goal of the program to get technology into the classrooms and incorporate it into content instruction. Administration hopes to have the technology teacher work with the other teachers to bring technology into their classes.

Additionally, the CMSEC is redesigning its websites in order to give staff members their own web pages. The improvements will allow teachers to post notes to the web and to have the potential to use different instructional models (i.e., the flip model).

Career Technical Education

Research has shown Career Technical Education (CTE) to be a beneficial service for students similar to those in Worcester's alternative programs.[6] CTE provides a concrete career pathway. It is also a "hands-on" learning opportunity, a style that many students in alternative programs prefer. In Worcester, the availability of CTE opportunities varied by alternative program site, and none of the programs had comprehensive CTE programming. In the Transition Program, vocational programs served as an enrichment option, because the program is located in the same building as

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[6] Thomas Hehir, Shaun Dougherty, and Todd Grindal, *Students with Disabilities in Massachusetts Career and Technical Education Programs (*Boston, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012).

the Alternative Program at St. Casmir's, which has several vocational classes staffed with teachers who are trained in special education and understand the students and their needs. There are no vocational options for students in the Challenge, Reach or Creamer programs. There is an effort to increase the scope of the Creamer program to include SEL and career prep as well as academic support for the students. The Woodward Day School has a woodshop at one of the sites.

Professional Practices

Research has shown teacher collaboration to be a vital factor in effective education. In effective schools, teachers collaborate with a focused agenda of improving teaching and learning. In recent research on urban schools that showed significant improvement, researchers identified "teacher collaboration as a key element in driving school improvement, creating an environment for teachers to improve their practice, while facilitating action designed to address diverse student needs."[7] Teacher collaboration is also a critical element in an MTSS organizational framework. In MTSS, the collaboration focuses on progress monitoring of students in either an RTI approach to support academic success or a PBIS approach to social-emotional learning. This section of the report provides an overview of how collaborative teaming was used in each program toward the goals of improved instruction and academic and SEL progress monitoring.

It should be noted that all of the programs reviewed had a team orientation to service provision. Faculty worked together closely to meet the needs of students in their programs. Depending on the nature of the program, this collaboration took on different forms. For example, the Safety Center and the Transition Program do not have a heavy focus on academics, but rather on stabilization and establishing an appropriate plan for students. Additionally, the different programs approached teaming with varied intensity and structure.

Academic Teaming and Progress Monitoring

Academic progress monitoring requires the adoption of universal screeners that allow faculty to understand where a student is proficient and where he or she needs additional support, as well as showing student progress with regard to any intervention.

Safety Center and Transition Program

As noted above, the Safety Center and Transition Program do not need to establish this practice because of the short duration of time a student spends in the program.

Challenge and Reach Academies

At the Challenge and Reach Academies, teachers reported that they liked working with their administration and with each other on their teams. While faculty meets daily after school to discuss the day, there was no specific time designated to discuss content instruction. Because of the small size of each program with only one teacher in each

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[7] Jennifer Poulos, et al., *Making Space: The Value of Teacher Collaboration* (Boston, MA: Edvestors, 2014).

content area, teachers were isolated in their content instruction. The Challenge and Reach programs use MCAS as a primary measuring stick—as well as Accusess in the PLATO program, which gives a grade level sense of where students really are academically. However, there is no measurement for incremental progress monitoring that is related to content instruction.

Creamer Center Day Program

At the Creamer Center Day Program, teachers work as interdisciplinary teams and meet to discuss how each student is doing. Also, because the program is larger than either Challenge or Reach, teachers are able to meet weekly in common planning time with other content teachers. In this time teachers discuss classroom routines and specific strategies to enhance their academic instruction. Consistency in routines was identified as an important feature to have between classes and teams in the building. Similar teaching routines, such as posted classwork and posted lesson plans, were identified as important. Additionally, faculty time is used to plan around the school SMART Goals.

The Creamer Day Program uses Accusess three times per year as a progress monitoring tool. Accusess gives a math and a reading score as well as a writing component. Teams use the scores to look at data informally and discuss instruction. An identified challenge was that the programs did not use a content assessment that could measure incremental progress, such as Measure of Academic Progress (MAPS). A content-specific assessment like MAPS would be helpful to content teachers in the identification of student needs and growth. An additional challenge that was mentioned was the high degree of mobility among students.

Woodward Day School

The faculty of the Woodward Day School at CMSEC meets every day for an hour after school to review the events of the day. It is also a time for teachers to set goals, grade student work, or get other work done. The program, at the administrative level, just started using data walls as a form of progress monitoring, and staff are using high-level information such as demographic and attendance data on a programmatic level. They also use MCAS comparisons.

A data system for academics is still needed at Woodward. While there is progress reporting and conferences with students and families, program administration is looking for better ways to keep the information in a way that teachers can use for the new evaluation system and incremental progress monitoring. Next year the program will be getting and using the MAPS assessment. This will help teachers see the incremental progress that they are making. Additionally, Edgenuity has created a link with MAPS. This will allow for a customized learning plan to be crafted that students can log into from home or school.

Social-emotional Learning (SEL) and SEL Progress Monitoring

Teaching appropriate behavior in schools and classrooms, as persistently as reading or other academic content is taught, is now viewed as an essential act of prevention, and it

speaks to the power and promise underlying the PBIS aspect of MTSS.[8] A fully implemented MTSS framework—academic and behavioral—will go a long way toward creating a system that can support all students with academic and behavioral challenges.

It should be noted and commended that all programs reviewed had faculty who were welcoming of students and had a student-centered approach to their instruction. They were supportive of students' emotional needs as well. However, intentional social-emotional supports varied by program.

Safety Center and Transition Program

The Safety Center and Transition Program, while short-term, are intensely focused on the social-emotional support of their students. The school adjustment counselors work together closely to assess students and create appropriate plans for them.

Progress monitoring at the Safety Center and Transition Program is different from that of the other alternative programs in Worcester, as students leave the program after stabilization and have to be followed up. Programmatic data collection began two years ago as a program staff initiative. Data are collected by the program staff. This is an important practice but also poses several difficulties. First, the program staff can access the SAGE database for the students' Worcester history but have difficulty aligning the system for use in their program. When progress monitoring, program staff does not always find that sending schools have appropriately entered the Safety and Transition program data into the SAGE system, which leads to inaccurate student records. Second, time or clerical support to enter the data is needed and would be appreciated. Finally, consistent technology is greatly needed for data collection and review. At the time of the program visit, a new computer had been purchased for the programs but had not been set up for staff use. Staff had put their program data "in the Cloud" but could not access or use it.

A final identified challenge for program staff was that if progress monitoring indicates more intense clinical service provision is warranted, there is not enough mental health support. There is a trend that the students the program is receiving are sicker or more traumatized. Many come to the programs with home trauma histories. Getting these students set up with therapy is difficult. Staff identified the need for a network of providers for follow up.

Challenge and Reach Academies

At the Challenge and Reach programs, faculty meets every day to discuss discipline, the point system, and other issues. There were varied reports, however, on the consistency of implementation of these elements. For example, in regard to common rules and use

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[8] Bob Algozzine, Chuang Wang and Amy S. Violette, "Reexamining the Relationship Between Academic Achievement and Social Behavior," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* 13, no. 1 (2011): 3-16.

of the point system, one teacher related, "Most teachers have been here since the start so there is a sense of consistency," but another said, "There is no consistency between teachers."

Teachers mentioned having a hard time dealing with the behaviors exhibited by students and feel they spend more time managing behavior than teaching material. The Challenge and Reach teachers all came from comprehensive schools. They relate well to the kids but do not have formal training around behavioral issues or programs to support the current students.

Implementation of intervention and programmatic support seemed very unfocused and at times ill informed. Frameworks such as PBIS were not appropriately understood or implemented (one person said, "Last year we did a program, PBIS, but it didn't really work."). There was no indication that the appropriate program supports, professional development, or coaching was in place to guide staff practice or the implementation process around PBIS.

The only behavioral intervention teachers mentioned were office referrals. There is no in-house suspension room because of staffing and space. It was mentioned that to activate additional support for students, "We have to suspend them to get support." Tiered behavioral interventions and behavioral supports need to be addressed in order to provide better professional development to the faculty and services to the students in the program.

There is an adjustment counselor, but this staffing level does not support programming to meet the trends in student psychological needs. For example, more girls have been coming into the program who are aggressive and would benefit from therapeutic intervention with self-esteem and anger management. This service could not be offered because of insufficient staffing and expertise. It was identified by administration that "a partnership with a clinical agency would be important—the high level clinical needs are the pressing issue."

Creamer Center Programs
At the Creamer Center programs (Day, Evening and Credit Recovery) teachers work as interdisciplinary teams and meet to discuss how each student is doing. This common team time focuses on the whole child. A science teacher said, "Our high expectations are part of our culture here. Our goal is to get them through high school." Faculty at the Creamer Center did not mention a lack of in-house intervention, but they did mention that guidance faculty and social workers were not always present when they were most needed, because their time is shared with other programs. As in the other programs, the need for more therapeutic supports was identified as an area of great importance at the Creamer Center.

Woodward Day School
The Woodward Day School (CMSEC) staff meets daily for an hour after school and review the events of the day. There is a focus on supporting students to learn appropriate behaviors and social skills. Behavior is tracked using a point system. These

data are used to decide placements. Data collection on particular skills is not elaborate and is very casual. Staff reported that currently "we get to know our students well, and we know each other. We don't document the specific progress." Program administration is planning to develop protocols and supports so that the data collection and intervention implementation are done with fidelity. This effort is planned with the intention of being able to craft defined and targeted interventions.

The point system and clinical supports are integral to the program's design. Faculty mentioned having supportive and well-versed administrators. Additionally, faculty mentioned the supports received from the contracted clinician who comes in and meets with students to provide therapeutic support. There are clear guidelines for communication and practice in the program. Faculty attributed the consistency in the program to their daily meetings. Most students see all teachers. The only students that don't are high school students who might only need a couple of courses. Communication with students is respectful and purposeful in establishing relationships. Clinical issues are relegated to administration and guidance. Teachers also mentioned the behavioral system at the program that provides guidelines for discipline and a process for intervening with students. If teachers are unable to work with a student they contact the administrator and she works with him or her. There is an in-house room where a student can do work if they need to be out of the classroom. There is a "no physical intervention" policy. If a student walks out they are not physically stopped.

A challenge mentioned at Woodward was the transience of students. The different evaluation timelines (entry and exit dates from the program) makes it very difficult to track students systemically.

Professional Development

Professional learning leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Through professional learning, educators develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. Learning Forward, with the contribution of 40 professional associations and education organizations, developed the Standards for Professional Leaning (see below).

> ### Standards for Professional Learning[9]
>
> **Learning Communities.** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
>
> **Leadership.** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create

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[9] *Standards for Professional Learning: Quick Reference Guide*. (Oxford, OH: Learning Forward, 2011), accessed July 1, 2014, http://www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/standardsreferenceguide.pdf?sfvrsn=0

support systems for professional learning.

Resources. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Data. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Learning Design. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Implementation. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.

Outcomes. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Among the programs reviewed, the professional learning needs of faculty varied depending on the nature of the program and its intended purpose. Faculty at the Safety Center and Transition Program felt they had adequate professional development and mentioned attending conferences and PD on trauma, school safety, loss and grieving, and bullying and remediation. They also mentioned taking classes on legal issues involving students and schools. As part of the Critical Incidents Support Team for Worcester (responds to incidents such as 9/11 and the Worcester fires), the school adjustment counselors receive additional training. It was felt that professional development on critical issues such as risk assessment, mental health, and trauma and loss should continue to be supported.

Program faculty at the Challenge, Reach, Creamer and Woodward programs are getting support to establish SMART Goals and collect appropriate evidence for the new teacher evaluation system being implemented across the state of Massachusetts. Teachers in the Woodward Day program have a consultant working with them to establish methods to support teachers with the documentation needed for the evaluation system. Teachers in the Creamer, Challenge, and Reach programs received Professional Development and organizational binders that are pre-equipped with appropriately labeled tabs, so they can see what documentation is needed and how to arrange it from Tim Whalen. They have been using them to organize the documentation required for the evaluation system. The Creamer teachers, who have communities of practice and the ability to discuss their content area materials with colleagues, have had the most focused conversations regarding the evaluation and presenting their supporting evidence.

A common report from all programs was the need for ongoing support in the implementation of new teaching strategies. All programs mentioned having ample

access to information and professional development on differentiation for ELLs and students with special education needs. However, the only program that seemed systemically organized to support the implementation of new practices was the Creamer Center Day Program, where there is Common Planning Time (CPT) for teachers to discuss the use and success of new strategies. As one teachers said, "The whole system did Differentiated Instruction. Our staff did RETELL training, short bridge and long bridge. The extra eight hours last year we focused on reading and writing examples. We were able to meet fifth period and discuss strategies."

An administrator at the Creamer Evening Program reinforced this method of embedding Professional Development support into the daily practice of teachers as she mentioned taking the administrative RETELL training and using this information in observations. It was mentioned that in coaching the teachers, "observing them and supporting them to implement new strategies is necessary. Changing habits and teaching styles is not easy."

Similar reports regarding the need for coaching and ongoing support came from the Woodward Day School, where all program staff had taken the RETELL, yet the implementation of strategies necessitated additional support. They were able to get support from the ESL consultant, which was deemed helpful, but additional ongoing, site-based coaching was desired.

Recommendations for Resources, Professional Practice, and Professional Development

As Worcester Public Schools works toward implementation of MTSS, it will be critical to integrate efforts in the areas of RTI and PBIS to develop a robust and systemic MTSS framework for both academic and behavioral multi-level prevention. Critical resources, collaborative practices, and professional development will need to be planned for and supported in a longitudinal fashion. The following recommendations address resources, professional practices, and professional development that will be of importance to the creation and support of MTSS.

As the district moves to an MTSS framework as the organizational framework, it is imperative that there is focus on both the implementation and the outcome. Despite research linking quality of program implementation with student outcomes, the process of monitoring the quality of implementation is often overlooked, or given lower priority than measuring outcomes.[10] Comprehensive measurement of the implementation quality of both a practice (e.g., differentiation or co-teaching) and its support system (e.g., professional development, coaching support) should include assessments in terms of fidelity (degree to which a practice and its support system are conducted as planned) as well as quality of delivery. Without such monitoring, two types of "drift" commonly

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[10] Celene E. Domitrovich, et al., "Maximizing the Implementation Quality of Evidence-based Preventive Interventions in Schools: A Conceptual Framework," *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion* 1, no. 3 (2008): 6-28.

occur when evidence-based practices are implemented in school settings: deviation from the "model" version of the practice and deviation from the corresponding support system.[11] Multiple indicators of program adherence allow a strong assessment of the degree of discrepancy between how practices were intended to be implemented and the way they are actually being implemented in real-world settings by school system personnel.[12]

Resources

Academic Curriculum
While programs had access to the general education curricular materials, there was inconsistency in the professional development and resources teachers received to use the content materials.
Curriculum liaisons should work with alternative education faculty to do the following:
- Ensure they are trained in the curriculum.
- Make sure they have complete curriculum sets (teacher guides etc.) for the content and grade levels they teach.
- Help them understand appropriate accommodations to the general education curriculum. (For an excellent resource for PD on research-based instruction as well as leadership modules, see Success at the Core: http://www.successatthecore.com/)

Differentiation is a term that was often used by personnel in the district to mean "having the appropriate grade level materials for a particular student." The alternative programs reviewed all provided a flexible and "different " approach to instruction and student learning, however, a greater degree of differentiation is often warranted. The current trends in student profiles indicate a need to reassess the amount of time that a special educator is present in the programs and additionally to support programs with materials (i.e. leveled readers) for students who require more scaffolding for academic success.
Additionally, It is important that teachers be supported in methods to differentiate and ways to enhance instruction for students with disabilities. Accordingly, the district should do the following:
- Provide professional development where teachers learn to differentiate using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Provide additional resources to classrooms to support more flexible instruction (e.g. leveled readers or manipulatives).

Credit Recovery Tools
While all programs had access to PLATO as a potential credit recovery tool, access to PLATO and the use of the program varied. Many times the program was not used to its potential because of percieved conflicts with scheduling. To offer students more customized options for achieving a high school credit, it is recommended that the

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

district work with program coordinators and staff to define potential uses and flexible scheduling options to enhance the use of credit recovery tools.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum

Every program reviewed has a student population that would benefit from SEL, yet none of them have a formal curriculum. All programs would benefit from having an SEL curriculum put in place and a more formalized approach for its implementation. Teachers should be provided with professional development and support for implementing SEL.

An excellent array of books, curriculum and informational resources about SEL can be found at Sound Discipline, http://www.sounddiscipline.org/resources/index.html

Clinical Intervention

While an SEL curriculum is helpful, there will be students who require additional intervention. The mental health needs of students in many of the alternative programs are increasing. The staff of all of the programs mentioned needing more support in order to address all the needs of their students. It is recommended that there be a district initiative to create additional partnerships with clinical agencies for therapeutic intervention in the alternative programs.

Technology

Technology skills for communication, information literacy, and learning to collaborate with others and connect through technology are essential skills in a knowledge-based economy. In order for students to have full access to learning these 21st Century skills, technology must be present in their classrooms and teachers need to know how to teach with technology and support students to use technology as a learning and communication tool. The fragmented technology provision and use across all programs does not provide this kind of learning environment for students. It is recommended that a systemic approach to updating the technology at all alternative programs be planned and implemented.

Adequate technology at all programs will be an imperative element to address if MTSS is to be fully implemented, as many of the screeners and progress monitoring tools require updated computers and software.

Career Vocational and Technical Education

CTE classrooms provide an opportunity for students to be in smaller classes working closely with a CTE instructor. Instruction tends to be "hands on" using multiple modalities of learning. Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study[13] (NLTS) indicate that students with disabilities who attended vocational education programs had higher employment rates and higher salaries five years after high school graduation.[14]

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[13] See http://www.nlts2.org/index.html for full description of NLTS study design and findings.

[14] Mary Wagner, Jose Blackorby, Renee Cameto, and Lynn Newman, *What Makes a Difference? Influences on Postschool Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities* (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 1993).

Additionally, the new College and Career Readiness Standards[15] in Massachusetts require workplace readiness skills to be addressed as part of a high school experience. The programs reviewed that had vocational classes reported being able to engage students in meaningful ways and that students enjoyed these classes. Not all programs had access to vocational classes, however. It is recommended that programs such as Challenge, Reach and Creamer be provided with support to develop such a program, or to partner with an organization or industry to provide vocational coursework for their students.

Facilities

Buildings themselves can enhance or detract from educational programming. It may be prudent to reconsider the facilities and the programmatic needs of some of the alternative programs reviewed, and see if some may be housed together, to take advantage of possible economies of scale.

The small program and class sizes of Worcester's alternative education offerings are important features to maintain. Faculty and students alike note student responsiveness to the small program/small class setting. As one Woodward Day student said, "This school helps me focus." However, when very small programs like Reach and Challenge are in a separate building, the staff may have difficulty in maintaining flexible programming and meeting social emotional needs. On the other hand, because the Creamer Center has a larger number of staff in the same building, it is able to provide programming that spans from the day into the evening. Additionally, it is only possible to provide physical education, science labs, or technical/vocational programming in a building that is large enough to house the appropriate resources.

Professional Practices

Academic Teaming and Progress Monitoring

Program faculty that had dedicated time and a dedicated focus for teaming reported higher levels of consistency and support in their programs. These reports were confirmed with observational data. It is recommended that the district do the following:

- Establish or maintain common planning time for academic content groups at each program that provides academic instruction.
- Establish teams for the progress monitoring of SEL and clinical issues.
- Establish faculty times for discussion of building-wide trends or critical student issues.
- Encourage regular conversation across programs regarding consistency of routines (academic and clinical).

With the upcoming implementation of MTSS, a data system that will have the capacity to track intervention, both academic and social-emotional, will need to be in place, along with professional development in its use. Ideally, the system should be used by all schools and programs (including the Safety Center and the Transition Program). The district is advised to do the following:

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[15] See http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/ for most recent CCR standards

- Collect meaningful data that is aligned with the program's academic goals to inform program improvement and refinement.
- Create a process to meet and discuss data and share resources (i.e. academic progress monitoring meetings for programs).
- Supply appropriate assessment tools to teachers who are working with students who are significantly below grade level. MCAS is too global. MAPS allows for more targeted instruction and progress monitoring.
- Discuss the relative advantage of PLATO versus Edgenuity.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and SEL Progress Monitoring
Program infrastructures and tiered interventions will need to be developed and supported if the implementation of tiered supports is to be successful. The Challenge program, in particular, could use support in this endeavor. The following recommendations are offered:

- Collect meaningful data that is aligned with the program's SEL goals to inform program improvement and refinement.
- Create a process to meet and discuss SEL data and share resources (i.e. SEL progress monitoring meetings for programs).

The district needs to be more supportive and directive about the collection of referral and attendance data in these specialized programs in order to establish and monitor programmatic trends.

Professional Development
The professional development that was most meaningful to teachers was school-based and directly related to their practice. It often involved either a coaching or a PLC model. Critical issues mentioned above that should continue to be supported by job-embedded professional development are as follows:

- Progress monitoring and use of data
- Differentiation, UDL, and instructional routines
- SEL curriculum and its implementation. This would involve training on SEL strategies integrated into a strategic professional development agenda.
- Risk assessment, mental health, and trauma and loss
- Use of technology in instruction

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Appendices

Appendix A Interviews, Focus Groups and Site Visits

Interviews
District and Program Administration
Marco Rodrigues, Chief Academic Officer
Gregg Bares, Manager of Grant Resources
Dolores M. Gribouski, Quadrant Manager for Doherty & North Quadrants
Mark T. Berthiaume, Communication and School Support Coordinator (referrals to safety and transition)
Tim Whalen, Creamer Day and Evening, Challenge/ Reach
Michael O'Neil, Principal, Alternative School at St. Casmir's
Jeffery Creamer, Assistant Principal, Challenge and Reach Academies
Rob Pezzella, School Safety Liaison, Coordinator of Safety and Transition Programs
Mary Baker, Executive Director, Central Massachusetts Special Education Collaborative (CMSEC)
Neil Trahan, Director of Curriculum, Data and Technology, CMSEC
Angela Moore, Director, Woodward Day School
Lisa Roberts, Assistant Director, Woodward Day School
Rose Mgbojikwe, Assistant Principal, Creamer Evening Program
Angela Dyer, Juvenile Resource Center

Focus Groups
Challenge/Reach:
David MacNamara, Middle School Math
Kathy Bracero, Special Education
Shawn Degnan, High School History
Melanie Gage, ELA

Creamer Center:
Paul Gaffrey, Kim Brennan, and Scott Moriarty, Science Team, Creamer Center
David Notaro, Math, Day and Evening programs, Creamer Center

Safety/TransitionPrograms:
Iliana D'Limis, Counselor for School Safety
Carrie Phillips, School Adjustment Counselor
Mr. Incutto Special Education

Woodward Day School:
Joe Sposeto, Math
Beth _____, ELA
Carol Diangangelus, Health
Dave Tucket, Science and Math

Site Visits
The Gerald Creamer Center (Day, Credit Recovery, and Evening program)
Challenge Academy and Reach Academy
The Safety Center and Transition Program
The Alternative School at St. Casmir's
Woodward Day School (McKeon Street)

Appendix B Student Demographics and Staffing By Program

Safety and Transition Center Staffing
Program Coordinator - Dr. Michael O'Neil
Student Time 7:29-1:11

2013 - 2014

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SP
7-12	Up to 12 186/Sch. Yr	1/Share						2				

Transition Program Student Data *staff records*	2012-2013	2013-2014 (as of 3/20/14)
Referrals	66	40
Special Ed or in referral process for SPED	42	33
Regular ed	24	7
Average length of stay	10.4	14
Range of days	1-47	1-35
# of students over 7 days	33	23
# of students over 14 days	12	12

Transition Center Discharge Placement Outcomes 2012-2013	
Returned to previous placement	19.7%
More restrictive setting	55.7
Out-of-District placement	1.6
Student moved out of Worcester	0.0
Other	23.0

2013-2014 Reasons for Referrals to Transition Program *Note: (55% of total referrals SPED/23% in referral for sped/22% reg. ed.)*	Number of students
Safety concerns	7
Awaiting Long term suspension	14
Awaiting Team Evaluation	10
Extended evaluation	0
New to Worcester with significant behavioral hx – Awaiting records	6
New to Worcester with sig. lapse in education – awaiting Records	1
Entry form DYS/Specialized foster care – Awaiting records	0
Awaiting placement in alternative setting	2
Other	0

Challenge Academy - Day Program - Chatham Street
Timothy Whalen
Student Time 8:00 - 2:00
2013-2014

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SPED
7&8	40	LT/Stipend	0	3	1	Share/RA		Share/RA	0.2	Share/RA	N/A	Share/RA

Reach Academy - Day Program - Chatham Street
Timothy Whalen
Student Time 7:30 - 1:30
2013-2014

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SPED
9&10	60	LT/Stipend	0	4	1	Share/CA		Share/CA	0.2	Share/CA	N/A	Share/CA

Challenge and Reach Academies

Student Demographic Breakdown (March SIMS file submission) March 2013-14 School Year

Alternative Program Location	Enrolled Student Count	Grade Distribution						Gender	
		7	8	9	10	11	12	F	M
Challenge Academy	27	5	22					12	15
Reach Academy	31			18	13			10	21

Alternative Program Location	Special Education Status				Low Income Status		
	Not Sped	Initial Referral	Valid IEP	Formerly Sped	Full Price Lunch	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
Challenge Academy	15	3	7	2	4	22	1
Reach Academy	27		2	2	6	25	

Alternative Program Location	English Proficiency Level					
	No EPL	2	3	4	5	6
Challenge Academy	19		3	2	3	
Reach Academy	17		2	5	7	

The Gerald Creamer Center - Day Program - Granite Street
Timothy Whalen
Student Time 7:30 - 1:30
2013-2014

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SPED
11 & 12	180	1/Coor.	0	18	0	1		Share/RCA	0.4	Share/RCA	N/A	Share/RCA

Evening High School - Granite Street
Timothy Whalen
Student Time 3:00 - 7:00
2013-2014

Mon-Thurs./3:00-7:00 pm

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SPED
11 & 12	70	AP		4		Share	Share	Share 4x wk		Share 3x wk	Share 2x wk	Share 4x wk

Credit Recovery - Granite Street
Timothy Whalen
Student Time 3:00 - 7:00
2013-2014

Mon-Thurs./Flex Time

Grade(s)	Student Count	Adm.	MCAS Tutor	Teacher(s)	IA	Secretary	Security	SAC	Guidance	ELL	PE	SPED
9 & 10		AP		4		Share	Share	Share		Share	Share	Share

									4x wk		3x wk	2x wk	4x wk

Gerald Creamer Programs

Student Demographic Breakdown (March SIMS file submission) March 2013-14 School Year

Alternative Program Location	Enrolled Student Count	Grade Distribution						Gender	
		7	8	9	10	11	12	F	M
Gerald Creamer Center	151			5	25	51	70	61	90
Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	82			5	29	29	19	36	46
Credit Recovery Evening	17			10	7			9	8

Alternative Program Location	English Language Learner Status				English Proficiency Level					
	Not ELL	Await Test	ELL Services	Transit	No EPL	2	3	4	5	6
Gerald Creamer Center	128		20	3	96	2	2	10	40	1
Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	65		15	2	44	1	8	7	22	
Credit Recovery Evening	16		1		11			2	4	

Gerald Creamer Programs

Student Demographic Breakdown (March SIMS file submission) March 2013-14 School Year (cont.)

Alternative Program Location	Special Education Status				Low Income Status		
	Not Sped	Initial Refer	Valid IEP	Formerly Sped	Full Price Lunch	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
Gerald Creamer Center	117	1	23	10	30	118	3
Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	57	1	13	11	17	64	1
Credit Recovery Evening	15		2		1	16	

Appendix C Programmatic Trend Data

Historical Trends							
2012-13							
Alternative Program Location		Student Count	Grad	Cert	Less Restrictive	Acad. Progress 1+ Grade	MCAS
CHAL	Challenge Academy	39	0	0	5	1	0
RCH	Reach Academy	43	0	0	10	4	4
CSC	Gerald Creamer Center	177	109	8	121	13	112
CRE	Credit Recovery Evening	52	0	0	16	1	1
CSCE	Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	104	25	5	60	3	36
2011-12							
Alternative Program Location		Student Count	Grad	Cert	Less Restrictive	Acad. Progress 1+ Grade	MCAS
CHAL	Challenge Academy	14	0	0	2	2	0
RCH	Reach Academy	26	0	0	9	4	3
CSC	Gerald Creamer Center	193	104	12	155	2	122
CRE	Credit Recovery Evening	33	0	1	14	0	0
CSCE	Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	63	15	1	41	0	24
2010-11							
Alternative Program Location		Student Count	Grad	Cert	Less Restrictive	Acad. Progress 1+ Grade	MCAS
CSC	Gerald Creamer Center	250	108	18	172	1	97
CRE	Credit Recovery Evening	49	0	0	20	3	4
CSCE	Gerald Creamer Center - Evening	92	17	5	52	3	22

EAW

EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORCESTER, INC.

397 Grove Street, Worcester, Massachusetts 01605

(508) 791-3296

October 2, 2015

Mayor Joseph Petty
c/o Dr. Helen Friel
Clerk of the School Committee
20 Irving St.
Worcester, MA 01609

Dear Mayor Petty:

This letter is meant to notify you that the EAW is hereby exercising its right to enter into negotiations over successor collective bargaining agreements for the following contracts:

Bus Drivers (Aides to the Physically Handicapped)
Bus Monitors
Units A & B
Instructional Assistants
Parent Liaisons
ESL Tutors
OT/PT Assistants

Please advise your counsel to contact my office in order to arrange negotiation dates. Thank you and we look forward to a successful bargaining process.

Yours truly,

Beth Kaake
Executive Secretary/MTA Consultant

:eb
c.   Dr. Melinda Boone
      John Hennessey
      Atty. Sean Sweeney
      Mark Brophy
      Leonard Zalauskas

MTA   EAW: an affiliate of the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the National Education Association

Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies

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TSONGAS INDUSTRIAL HISTORY CENTER (LOWELL)
JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM (BOSTON)
For workshop descriptions and to register, go to www.masscouncil.org

OUR STORY

Unified Theater dissolves typical barriers between youth through transformative, school based performing arts programming. At Unified Theater, young people with and without disabilities, of all backgrounds, come together as equals to put on a production. The production is entirely organized, written, and directed by the students themselves. In over sixty schools across the country over 6,000 students with and without disabilities have performed to almost 10,000 audience members. The concept is simple: let teens lead, let creativity rule, and put the Spotlight on Ability.

Watch Micaela, our founder, share our story as a Social Innovation Fellow at Chicago Ideas week...

Micaela Connery: Putting the Spotlight on Ability

How We Began

Unified Theater began with Kelsey and Micaela. As cousins born three months apart, Kelsey and Micaela were united by their love for music, roller coasters, long drives, and beach side picnics rather than divided by the fact that Kelsey was born with disabilities that limited her ability to walk and talk. Kelsey taught Micaela, and the entire world, to see ability first, to savor each moment of joy and the people that bring them, and to never ever take life too seriously. As a child, Micaela had another love too, theater and music. But she was always frustrated to see no kids with disabilities, like Kelsey, in her music and theater programs. So, influenced by Kelsey, Micaela started the first Unified Theater group at the age of 15 at Conard High School, launching a creative youth led movement towards full inclusion.

Our founding story is still very much a part of who we are today at Unified Theater. We still focus on real inclusion and seeing ability first. We're still driven by youth for youth. Just like Micaela started and led the first Unified Theater group in her school, youth across the country are building and leading programs in their own schools. And, we still let creativity rule, understanding that theater, music, and art have a unique ability to dissolve typical barriers, unite diverse communities, and tell stories that transform the lives of performers and audiences alike.

Join a Production

Join a Unified Theater Spotlight School and participate in the cast or crew of a production! **Find your Spotlight School here** and complete the registration form to participate!

Make a Donation

Unified Theater is a not-for-profit organization that relies on gifts from our generous donors. **Donate** now to help us keep the Spotlight on Ability!

SPOTLIGHT CENTER

Student Leaders and Advisors - new to the Spotlight Center? **Click here** to create an account. Already registered? **Click here** to login.

OUR APPROACH

Our mission is simple at Unified Theater:

empower youth to lead | let creativity rule | spotlight on ability

This foundation drives everything we do here and informs all of our curriculum, program design and evaluation.

While our program is flexible to meet each Spotlight School's needs, each Unified Theater production must adhere to our Five Must-Dos.

The Unified Theater Five Must-Dos

1. **The program is entirely student-led**

2. **There are no buddies, partners, or different roles based on ability.**

3. **The production is an original, student-produced show that incorporates music, movement, and acting.**

4. **Participants are peers in middle school, high school, or college.**

5. **The group includes students of all abilities, interested, and backgrounds and is flexible to different student needs.**

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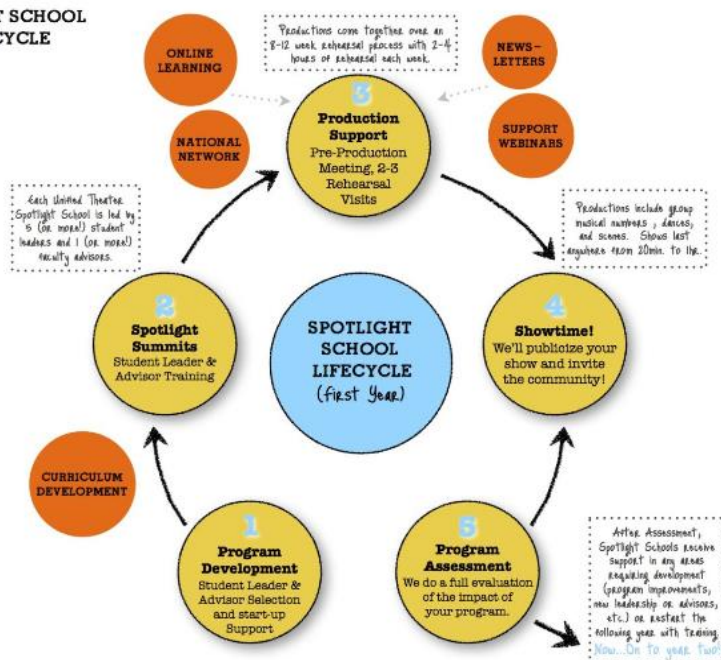
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Spotlight School Process (click to enlarge)

SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL YEAR CYCLE

SPOTLIGHT SCHOOL LIFECYCLE (first year)

ONLINE LEARNING
NATIONAL NETWORK
NEWS-LETTERS
SUPPORT WEBINARS
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

3 Production Support Pre-Production Meeting, 2-3 Rehearsal Visits

2 Spotlight Summits Student Leader & Advisor Training

4 Showtime! We'll publicize your show and invite the community!

1 Program Development Student Leader & Advisor Selection and start-up Support

5 Program Assessment We do a full evaluation of the impact of your program.

TRAINING & CURRICULUM

Each Unified Theater school receives tons of awesome support from our team throughout the entire Unified process!

- The **Unified Theater Handbook** offers 50+ pages of guidance on everything from inclusion etiquette to creating a show from scratch to group management tips. Each student leader and advisor receives a newly updated copy of the Handbook during the Spotlight Summit training.
- **Pre-production meetings** are held at or just after a school attends a Spotlight Summit. During these meetings, leaders and advisors bring together their best ideas for recruitment, themes, and inclusion in order to piece together a plan for their rehearsals.
- **Rehearsal visits** are conducted by our affiliate theaters or by UT staff members. Twice during each school's production process, a teaching artist will attend rehearsals and give student leaders feedback. They'll be able to workshop problem areas, help the group create goals for improvement, and offer suggestions to help build a more cohesive show. The first rehearsal visit is usually held as scene writing is wrapping up. The second rehearsal visit happens about 2 weeks before a final performance.
- **Spotlight Summits** are trainings attended annually by student leaders and advisors. Typically a day-long event, leaders learn about all things UT and go back to their schools ready to lead their productions. Here's a great video to explain what our Spotlight Summits are all about and you can click here for even more information!
- **The Spotlight Center** is an area of our website made just for advisors and student leaders. Leaders can access group rosters, post questions or other topics for discussion, learn more through files and videos, and communicate with other leaders and advisors across the country.

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SERVING STUDENTS OF ALL ABILITIES

Least Restrictive Environment:
Unified Theater productions are entirely inclusive of students with and without disabilities. Students with and without disabilities participate in productions at equal levels with no labeling or separation based on ability. Accommodations are made as needed.

Meeting IEP Goals for students with disabilities:
Teaching and generalizing social skills and other 'softer' IEP goals are difficult to do within a classroom. When a student enters a Unified Theater group, many IEP goals are generalized naturally and seamlessly.

Promoting Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)
Unified Theater productions are written by the students themselves. Often schools will ask the Unified Theater group to create a show around a theme focused on tolerance, respect, community, positive behavior, and kindness. Productions help model positive behaviors and promote a safer, more supportive school community.

PRAISED BY PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS

"It fostered greater communication skills, social skills, good decision making skills, and taking responsibility for his actions and choices."

90% of parents said that IEP goals were supplemented through Participation in Unified Theater.

"UT gave my daughter her first experience with students of varying abilities and as a direct result she has planned a career in either occupational or speech therapy."

83% of students said their career and educational goals were influenced by participating in UT.

"Collaboration at UT is everywhere - the production team collaborates with each other and with adults throughout the school, and community, and local businesses to produce an amazing product."

Students, parents, and administrators all agree that Unified Theater helps students feel included and involved within their communities.

"A few students who are really shy surprised me when I saw the performance- it brought them out of their shell."

95% of students said that Unified Theater improves their self-confidence.

"The greatest gift from the experiences was learning new ways to communicate and connect with other students."

95% of students said that they made new friends through Unified Theater.

EXTENDING LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Students participating in or leading Unified Theater groups may touch on the Common Core Standards, National Core Arts Standards, and 21st Century Learning skills as they brainstorm, write, rehearse, and perform their original works.

For a full view of how Unified Theater takes learning beyond the classroom, take a look at how our curriculum aligns with Common Core, National Core Arts Standards, and 21st Century Learning standards.

Suggested Activities for Schools, Community Organizations, Community Leaders, and Businesses to consider during the month of November as part of Family Literacy Month...

- Provide "Family Nights" where parents and children learn together
- Coordinate a "Read-a-Thon"
- Book swap week at our schools
- Issue a proclamation of your community's "Family Literacy Month"
- Invite local authors to share their experience as authors
- Encourage families to do oral storytelling and reflect on these stories in writing or in drawings
- Promote events for families of diverse cultural backgrounds, i.e., an international pot-luck dinner
- Invite local celebrities and community members into classrooms to read to children
- Offer opportunities for children to create songs, poems, plays, and art work about their families
- Promote literacy activities by donating or offering discounts on book marks, books, newspapers, art and science supplies, etc.
- Provide opportunities for inter-generational activities, i.e., storytelling at an elderly housing facility

Suggested Activities for Families

- Set aside time each day for literacy related activities, i.e., reading for 20 to 30 minutes
- When you watch a video or movie, read the book version and discuss the story
- Share and discuss current news, sports, cultural, or school events
- Host a reading, science, art, dance, or music activity at your home and ask neighbors to take turns as hosts
- Create family portfolios reflecting pictures, stories, poems, and drawings with captions
- Support schools in coordinating family literacy/learning hours before and/or after school
- Develop a family action plan for wellness, i.e., nutrition, stress management, exercise, etc.
- Make regular visits to the library
- Use everyday activities to incorporate literacy, i.e., develop shopping lists, read signs and labels at the grocery store, count money, measure and read recipes when cooking, count and read street signs when traveling.