



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186

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January 31, 2022

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff:

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has selected Milton Public Schools to participate in a district review during the 2021/22 school year. The purpose of the district review is to provide formative and actionable feedback on district practices, allowing district leaders to reflect on progress and strengthen staff and student performance. To meet this goal, DESE has contracted with a third-party, the American Institutes for Research[®] (AIR[®]), to assess the current practices in the Massachusetts District Standards (see Table 1).

The district's participation in this review will result in a culminating report that provides information about the strengths and weaknesses of current practices as they relate to the Massachusetts District Standards. Making these determinations requires on-site data collection including interviews and focus groups and classroom observations in addition to the collection and review of documents. The following provides an overview of the schedule for on-site data collection along with a brief overview of the data collection procedures.

- **Interviews and focus groups** will take place in the district during the week of March 7, 2022 (likely the 8th-9th or 9th-10th – exact date to be confirmed.) The purpose of the interviews and focus groups is to capture the voice of various stakeholder groups. This ensures that there are well-rounded perspectives that inform the resulting report. Participants' comments will not be attributed to individuals and any identification of individuals will not be apparent in the report. Preparation is not needed for the interviews that will encompass approximately 45–60-minutes. Any students who are chosen to participate in a focus group will have to obtain parent consent. Most interviews and focus groups will take place in-person, but in order to reach the optimal number of participants, some may be conducted virtually.

25 Gile Road, Milton, Massachusetts 02186

The Milton Public School system does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, gender identity, transgender status, gender transitioning, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, pregnancy/parenting status, marital status, sexual orientation, homelessness, or military status, in any of its programs, activities or operations. These include, but are not limited to, admissions, equal access to programs and activities, hiring and firing of staff, provision of and access to programs and services, as well as selection of volunteers, vendors and employers recruiting at the Milton Public Schools. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, students, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Janet Sheehan, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum & Human, 617-696-4812

- **Instructional observations** will take place in each school in the district over the course of March 7 through March 11, 2022. The purpose of the classroom observations is to gauge the quality of instruction overall in the district. Classroom teachers are expected to instruct as planned, without interruption, during the scheduled observation period. Data collected from the observations will be used in aggregate and will not reflect individual teacher performance or identify teacher names, classroom numbers, subjects, or specific grade levels. Preparation is not needed for the observations which will encompass approximately 20-minutes. A brief description about the observation instrument and process is attached.

Table 1. Massachusetts District Standards

Governance and Administrative Systems	Student-Centered Systems
Leadership and Governance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Committee Governance 2. District and School Leadership 3. District and School Improvement Planning 4. Budget Development 	Curriculum and Instruction <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum Selection and Use 2. Classroom Instruction 3. Student Access to Coursework
Human Resources and Professional Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure 2. Recruitment, Hiring, and Assignment 3. Supervision, Evaluation, and Educator Development 4. Recognition, Leadership Development, and Advancement 	Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data and Assessment Systems 2. Data Use 3. Sharing Results
Financial and Asset Management <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget Documentation and Reporting 2. Adequate Budget 3. Financial Tracking, Forecasting, Controls, and Audits 4. Capital Planning and Facility Maintenance 	Student Support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe and Supportive School Climate and Culture 2. Tiered Systems of Support 3. Family, Student, and Community Engagement and Partnerships

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District reviews are conducted according to Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. Please contact my office if you would like more details on this process.

As always, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James F. Jette", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James F. Jette
Superintendent

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District Review Instructional Observations Overview

Process. Instructional observations are conducted by trained and annually certified AIR staff. The observations will be conducted in a random set of classrooms in each school. Observers will check in with the school leader/principal prior to conducting visits to identify classrooms with substitutes or other extenuating circumstances. Observers conduct brief, 15-20 minute observations and are instructed to minimize disruption in the classroom. School leaders will be provided with a brief overview about the observations to share with staff prior to the visit and each certified observer will have these information sheets on hand to leave behind for teachers.

Reporting. Information on these observations will be reported at the grade span level (elementary, middle and high school). All observations are reported in aggregate, and individual teachers are not identified. These observations are not used for evaluative purposes for individuals, grade levels, or schools and are only reported at the grade span level. Only AIR staff have access to these data and they are maintained on a secure sharepoint site to which only AIR team members have access.

Observation Tool. The instructional observations being conducted by American Institutes for Research certified observers for the targeted district review are guided by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The CLASS protocols were developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia.

The K–3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

Table 1. CLASS K–3 Domains and Dimensions

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive Climate• Negative Climate• Teacher Sensitivity• Regard for Student Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior Management• Productivity• Instructional Learning Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concept Development• Quality of Feedback• Language Modeling

The Upper Elementary & Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to the same three domains, in addition to Student Engagement.

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Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary & Secondary Domains and Dimensions

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive Climate• Teacher Sensitivity• Regard for Student/Adolescent Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior Management• Productivity• Negative Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructional Learning Formats• Content Understanding• Analysis and Inquiry• Quality of Feedback• Instructional Dialogue
Student Engagement		

When conducting an observation, the observer rates each dimension on a scale of 1 to 7. The ratings of all classrooms will be aggregated for each domain and dimension in the final district report.

Members of the district review team who observe classrooms attended separate two-day trainings for each of the CLASS protocols. Observers then passed a rigorous certification exam to ensure that they can accurately rate the dimensions and engage in regular reliability checks. Finally, each observer is required to recertify by passing a rigorous exam annually.

If you have any questions about the classroom observations or the district reviews, please contact Betheny Lyke at blyke@air.org.

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