Targeted Site Visit Report

Winchendon Public Schools

Murdock Middle School

Key Findings aligned with Massachusetts' Turnaround Practices to inform district- and school-level strategic planning

Murdock Middle School, Grades 6-8
Site Visit Date: May 16-17, 2022
Report Submission Date: June 17, 2022

SCHOOLWORKS, LLC

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# THE TARGETED SITE VISIT (TSV) ASSESSEMENT AND CLASSROOM VISIT TOOL

Framework

A **research- and practice-based Targeted Site Visit (TSV) Framework** serves as the foundation for the site visit and subsequent analysis and presentation of findings provided in this report, based on evidence collected during the site visit to Murdock Middle School.

The TSV Framework uses Massachusetts' *Turnaround Practices*[i] and SchoolWorks' *Classroom Visit Tool* as complementary frameworks that serve as the basis for TSV protocols, evidence collection and analysis, and provision of feedback.

TSV Report Organization

- A **TSV Executive Summary of Key Strengths and Findings** that provides an evidence-based descriptive analysis of how the school is operating in relation to the Turnaround Practices and the Classroom Visit Tool. Building on the findings shared onsite, this section describes the key structures and systems[1] that the school is using to improve instruction and provides detailed evidence, grounded in the turnaround practices which may be used by school leadership to assess their current work and decide on key actions and strategies for moving forward, including the development of a Sustainable Improvement Plan.

- **TSV rubric ratings**[2] for each component assessed during the visit and the **Classroom Observation scores** for each dimension and indicator.

Massachusetts' School-level Turnaround Practices

Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration

Intentional practices for improving instruction

Student-specific supports and instruction to all students

School climate and culture

SchoolWorks' Classroom Visit Tool Dimensions

Common Core Alignment

Classroom Climate

Purposeful Teaching

In-Class Assessment and Adjustment

- **A one-page summary of the classroom observation data** that may be used to benchmark current and future analysis of classroom instruction and inform action planning.

- **A summary recap of the high-priority findings/issues identified during the onsite prioritization process** and the key action steps and benchmarks developed during day two of the visit.

- **Historical data from TSVs conducted in previous years, if applicable.**
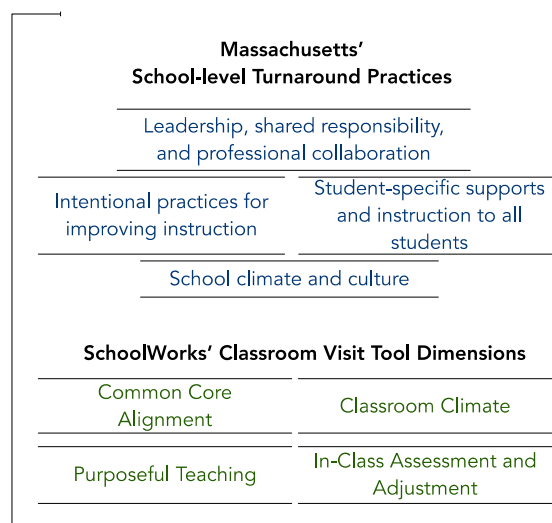
The purpose of the site visit and this report is to provide constructive feedback that district and school leadership can use to take specific actions and achieve the robust levels in the accompanying rubrics to accelerate improvement efforts and increase student achievement. Findings and evidence are intended to support schools in developing a Sustainable Improvement Plan and reflect upon current efforts to improve instruction and student achievement.

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[1] Key systems and structures include: (1) teaming configurations used in the school, including time and content (TP1); (2) how administrators monitor and provide feedback on instructional practice (TP2); (3) the specific interventions used with students (TP3); and (4) the school's approach to positive school climate and student behavior (TP4)

[2] The site visit report provides a **baseline rubric rating for specific components of each turnaround practice in the TSV Assessment**. For each component, the rubric rating is shaded (in grey). Note that the rubric ratings are intended to be formative and support reflective consideration of actions and strategies that may be useful to move towards the "robust" portion of the rubric.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Targeted site visitors conducted a full day site visit to collect information about how Murdock Middle School is working to continuously improve instructional practices, from the perspective of school leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers.

Three **Inquiry Questions** guided our conversation and questions.

1. How do you, as a school and as teachers, work to improve instruction and what structures, processes, and resources do you use to do so?
2. How do you work to create a safe and secure environment for students and for teachers?
3. To what extent is instruction vertically and horizontally aligned and how is the school trying to work towards greater alignment?

Following the site visit, information was summarized and assessed according to rubric dimensions and descriptors, which contributed to the following summary of strengths and key findings framed as suggested areas for improvement. A summary of rubric ratings is provided below (and listed in detail in Part II), followed by identified strengths and key findings to support ongoing improvement, planning, and reflection.

"Look Fors" during our site visit interviews and focus groups with administrators, coaches, and teachers.

- How are teaming structures used to improve instructional practices?
- How do teachers receive feedback and support on improving their instruction?
- How do instructional leaders and teachers develop and refine classroom instruction, including lesson and unit plans?
- How does the school support students from diverse backgrounds and ensure that instruction is relevant and engaging for all students?
- How does the school identify students that need support and provide targeted academic interventions and accelerated learning opportunities?
- To what extent do students and adults feel that the school is a positive environment for learning?

Summary of Rubric Ratings	Initial	Developing Low	Developing High	Robust
Component A: Teaming, Shared Leadership and Responsibility, and Collaboration				▓
Component B: Using Teams, Shared Leadership, and a Collaborative and Trusting Environment to Accelerate Improvement				▓
Component C: Defined Expectations for High Quality Instructional Practices				▓
Component D: Administrative Observations Leading to Constructive, Teacher-specific Feedback, Supports, and Professional Development			▓	
Component E: Teachers and Teacher Teams use Student Data to Adapt and Improve Instructional Strategies				▓
Component F. Using Data to Identify Student-Specific Academic and Non-Academic Needs				▓
Component G. Providing Targeted Interventions and Supports to Students and Monitoring for Effectiveness			▓	
Component H. Shared Behavioral Expectations that support Student Learning				▓
Component I. Targeted and effective social-emotional supports				▓
Component J. Establishing a collegial, respectful, and trusting professional environment				▓
Supplemental Rubric: Instructional Coherence			▓	

Summary of Strengths and Key Areas for Improvement

Strengths

- **Adoption and implementation of the Summit Learning Approach has provided a powerful engine for change and improvement.** Leaders and teachers provided a highly consistent narrative of how their school is organized to directly improve student learning and cultivate the growth of young adults. Leadership described using a research-based approach in selecting Summit Learning as a whole-school improvement model that ensures that all students have access to high-quality teachers. With an explicit emphasis on mastery learning, leaders, teachers, and students described how the multiple instructional and organizational features of the school (e.g., the Mentor/Mentee program, instructional program coherence, extensive and protocol-driven use of data, a user-friendly data dashboard, and extensive student-specific supports) all work together to build shared responsibility and ownership for student learning.
- **Emphasis on building positive relationships through the mentoring program.** Of particular note, leaders, teachers, and students described the usefulness of the Mentor/Mentee program. Specifically, teachers and students described how students engage in regular (e.g., weekly) goal-setting that is linked to real-time academic and non-academic data. Teachers described using data to directly inform their conversations with students and specific interventions, supports, and content-based workshops. Students described setting goals and using time afforded to them (via self-directed learning) to work toward goals. While there are likely ways to improve this system (and some students reported being overwhelmed with the system), there is clear evidence that this component of the school's improvement efforts is valued and useful.
- **Climate of respectful, collegial, and caring teams and staff.** Leaders and teachers spoke highly of their collaborative culture and teaming structures, in terms of the support they provide each other and receive from leadership. Teachers described the dual focus on building positive student relationships and increasing academic achievement as mutually reinforcing. Specifically, teachers could describe how instructional strategies and areas of focus (e.g., mastery learning, use of content and cognitive assessments) are strengthened by, and is part of their efforts, to build strong relationships with students. Classroom observation data collected by the site visit team provided strong evidence of consistent, effective instruction coupled with positive relationships and effective student engagement.

Area for Improvement

- **Continue to implement and refine tiered interventions and assessments that support all students.** The school reported having multiple systems to both identify student need and dedicated time (during student-directed learning and intervention blocks) to support students. Leaders and teachers noted that continuing to assess the actual impact of specific interventions is an important area for growth.
- **Develop systems and mechanisms to ensure that teachers receive customized feedback to improve their instruction.** Leaders described using the formal evaluation system as the primary means of providing teachers with feedback. Teachers noted that, when requested, they do receive support. However, leaders and teachers acknowledged that a system for providing teachers with ongoing informal feedback is not as consistent as needed.

II: FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CONTINUOUS AND SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT

Turnaround Practice 1: Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration

Finding Statement #1	Finding Statement #2
The school has established a clear system of structures and teaming practices that reinforce shared responsibility for student outcomes and improving students' achievement.	Leaders and teachers are effectively monitoring and modifying key improvement strategies as needed to continue to implement and sustain their work.

The school has an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), a student-support team (SST), a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) committee, and grade-level teams. The principal and dean of students collaboratively lead the school through a distributed leadership model. Leaders and staff consistently noted that teaming practices are effective and contribute to shared ownership and responsibility for student learning. Two leadership and teaming structures, as described by the school, illustrate how the school is operating.

- **A collaborative and representative ILT**. Leaders and teachers described the ILT as highly collaborative, high-functioning, effective, and representative. Including representatives from each grade (grade 6, and grades 7/8a and 7/8b), special education, interventions, technology, and guidance, the ILT members are the "communicators" to the rest of the school, allowing for reciprocal communication from grade levels to leadership and from the ILT (and leadership) to classroom teachers. The ILT reviews progress toward goals in their improvement plan, based on data and feedback from grade-level teams. For instance, ILT members described how structured conversations during grade-level common planning time (CPT), focusing on students' needs and instructional issues, directly informs their ILT meeting, "so that when we come together as an ILT, we have significant input and communication and make decisions together."

- **Collaborative and focused grade-level teaming**. Leaders and teachers described three core teacher teams: the 6th grade team; and two 7/8 grade teams. The 7/8 grade teams loop with their students as teachers teach sections of both 7th and 8th grade. Grade-level teams have formal CPT once per week and reported using structured and goal-driven protocols (e.g., agendas and process steps). Review of research-based protocols demonstrate that they are focused on student data, student work, and using data to develop academic and non-academic supports. Teachers reported leaving CPT meetings with specific goals, actions to support students, and next steps. Teachers noted that their team meetings have become more effective over the past few years. Many described using CPT to work on specific instructional issues, to co-plan with special educators and interventionists, and to problem-solve behavioral issues or identify research-based strategies to support students. Teachers also described using their common preparatory time to collaborate – especially with the interventionist and special education teachers.

The voiced success of leadership and teaming structures, as presented by teachers and briefly described above, is a direct result of the schools' strategic and thoughtful implementation of a competency-based approach to education and the use of the Summit Learning Model/Platform. Leaders, teachers, and students described multiple innovations that they see as important and that characterize their school. Key elements of the Summit Learning whole-school reform model include: (1) a goal-driven Mentor/Mentee program for students to develop and pursue weekly goals directly aligned with their core academic classes; 2) integration of cognitive skills and learning goals into the core curriculum; 3) a highly innovative instructional approach that builds student ownership of their learning, using a competency, or mastery, approach to content and skill acquisition, including teachers' grading of student mastery of concepts and skills; and 4) a robust learning platform and data dashboard (Summit Learning) that allows all stakeholders, including parents, quick access to standards-based data that includes multiple interim benchmarks and checkpoints used for goal-setting and progress-monitoring. These features support the teaming processes described above and set the context for subsequent findings.

TP1. Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration: The school has established a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration.

Component A. Teaming, Shared Leadership and Responsibility, and Collaboration
Collective, distributed leadership structures and practices are apparent throughout the school building in the form of an active and well-represented Instructional Leadership Team and grade-level and vertical teams. Administrators and teachers are jointly committed to and have assumed shared ownership and collective responsibility for improving student achievement.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
The school lacks established teaming structures and practices that allow for administrators and teachers to work collectively, deliberately, and proactively with one another in the pursuit of student achievement**.**	There is an emerging system of teaming structures and expectations that allow for leadership teams and **(few/some)** grade-level or vertical teams (inclusive of administrators and teachers) to actively implement key school improvement strategies or instructional strategies. However, **(few/some)** of these teams may not be inclusive of teachers throughout the school building and teaming practices may not be deliberate or sufficiently effective.		A clear system of structures and teaming practices has been established allowing for teams of teachers and administrators to deliberately work together focused on increasing student achievement. These teams are well-represented and exhibit shared ownership of efforts to improve student achievement. Teams have clear goals, protocols, and outcomes focused on improving classroom instruction and implementing improvement strategies.

Component B. Using Teams, Shared Leadership, and a Collaborative and Trusting Environment to Accelerate Improvement.
Administrators and teachers (through teacher teams or involvement in the ILT) are actively monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of key improvement strategies, use of resources, classroom instructional practices, and non-academic supports on student achievement.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
Administrators and teachers work together infrequently (or not at all) to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of improvement strategies, practices, and use of resources in pursuit of greater student achievement throughout the school building.	Administrators, coaches, and **(few/some)** teams are working collectively, deliberately, and proactively with one another to monitor and assess the implementation and effectiveness of improvement strategies, practices, and use of resources. Monitoring may **(not occur, infrequent occur)** and may **(not be linked/partially linked)** to specific outcomes or instructional strategies and used to make mid-course corrections.		Administrators and teachers actively monitor the implementation and use of strategies, practices, and resources in pursuit of greater student achievement and equity among students. Leadership knows which practices are working and which are not. There are teaming practices and protocols designed to support progress monitoring and to use of data to make immediate mid-course improvements in school-level strategies or in the implementation of instructional strategies.

Turnaround Practice 2: Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction

Finding Statement #3	Finding Statement #4	Finding Statement #5
Leadership has established and teachers are collaboratively working to implement high-quality instructional strategies, practices, and routines that are student-specific and reinforce high expectations for students.	The school has formal and informal processes to monitor classroom instruction but does not have systems to provide ongoing feedback and coaching to all teachers.	Leaders and teachers have a highly-organized system for collecting and analyzing student data that informs student goal-setting, mentoring, teacher lesson planning, and instruction.

Expectations for high-quality instruction are clearly presented in the Murdock Middle School staff handbook and were confirmed by teachers, students, and through classroom observations. Expectations include a clear lesson structure that includes a warm-up, a lesson launch, followed by an activity, a lesson synthesis, and a summarizing process. Leaders and teachers described setting mastery objectives that drive all aspects of student learning, including posting of learning objectives and the provision of ongoing and frequent written and oral feedback to students. Leaders described, and site visit team members observed, multiple classrooms using a similar "white board configuration" that included the objective, the description of the project, the content focus area, and a daily agenda. Multiple teachers described working over the summer to refine and update their lessons for the year. Leadership also noted that use of the Summit Learning Platform, which started prior to the Pandemic, allowed the school to quickly move to virtual learning last year and to then transition back to in-person learning this year with minimal challenges.

It is important to note that teachers and students are engaged in mastery of standards/objectives. Students reported and were observed working together in small groups on activities related to a broader "project" through which they apply specific skills (e.g., cognitive skills) and obtain content information related to the standard. Students described being responsible for learning some of the content on their own (e.g., through study, note-taking, research) and then taking "quizzes" to demonstrate their understanding of academic content. For instance, teachers and students reported that every student has to show their notes prior to taking a quiz (called a Focus Area Content Assessment), and that students could take quizzes multiple times to show mastery. Conversations with teachers and students provided compelling evidence that most to all students know precisely how they are proceeding toward meeting grade-level expectations, that they know what is expected or needed to obtain mastery, and that these expectations are consistently applied across subjects and grades.

Leaders and teachers reported that, this year, they have focused on using "Tier II" vocabulary (e.g., academic language, such as analyze or critique) and incorporating instructional strategies and higher-order questions so that students engage in strategic and extended thinking (e.g., Depth of Knowledge [DOK] levels 3 and 4). During classroom observations, all classrooms (12-of-12) demonstrated a partially effective or effective structured learning environment, focused instruction, and student participation and engagement. Nine-of-12 classrooms showed evidence of partially effective or effective higher-order thinking. When students were asked how often they receive feedback from teachers, they replied "all of the time." When asked how they receive feedback, they reported that there are columns for teacher notes on all their work and that they receive an electronic notification that feedback is ready to be reviewed via the Summit Learning platform. Some students described struggling with the platform, including expectations for student learning during their first year at the school, but they all noted that the platform is very helpful and allows them to see exactly where they are in each class. A review of the platform (as provided by teachers) illustrated how student data are presented and that students have scores and checkpoints of progress on content and across multiple cognitive skills – assessed and supported through rubrics used consistently by all teachers – that reinforce student learning.

Leadership described being in classrooms on a daily basis but, due to time and staff constraints, does not always provide informal feedback. However, teachers do receive feedback on their instruction through the formal Massachusetts teacher evaluation system and through conversations with colleagues during CPT. The school's handbook provides explicit instructions and expectations for classroom practice. Also, leadership reported that the school has spent a lot of time over the past few years to improve the consistency and rigor of classroom instruction. The school has a set of instructional look-fors, based on the State's evaluation framework, which are used to guide informal walkthroughs three times a year. The school does not have instructional coaches or a coaching model, and leadership acknowledged that additional teacher feedback and coaching would be useful. However, classroom observations provided evidence of instructional coherence that is reinforced through CPT work. When asked, teachers reported that, if needed, they can ask for assistance or support and that they have full confidence that the principal or others will give them the support they need. Additionally, teachers consistently reported that leadership "absolutely" knows what we are doing in the classroom and that professional development (PD) is available. Some teachers remarked that department meeting time was recently removed to allow for more time on mentoring and student support. While teachers voiced missing this important time, they also acknowledged that the principal was working to re-establish time for departments to meet together.

As noted above, the Summit Learning platform and teachers' use of common assessments and cognitive rubrics provide the basis for daily and weekly monitoring of student progress. Teachers describe multiple examples of reviewing student data during CPT and then developing content "workshops" for small groups of students, provided during students self-directed learning (SDL) period and targeted interventions, during the intervention block. Each teacher has a set of "mentees" and there is a dedicated period each day for the teacher mentor to meet with students, review data, and set weekly academic and non-academic goals. Then, teachers use their CPT to review each student's progress and have the flexibility to develop custom workshops and supports for students. Finally, the mentor teacher encourages (and sometimes directs) students to attend workshops and use their SDL period to work on specific academic goals. All teachers and students described this process as useful and student-centered.

TP2. Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction: The school employs intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction.

Component C. Defined Expectations for High-Quality Instructional Practices
School leadership has identified a clear instructional focus and shared expectations for instructional best practices that address clearly identified student-specific instructional needs.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
School leadership has not clearly identified or shared expectations for instructional best practices across the school. Varied instructional practices may be identified and discussed across some classrooms but are not deliberately supported through targeted professional development and coaching.	School leadership has identified a **(general/specific)** instructional focus or shared expectations for instructional best practices. These core instructional practices are partially supported through formal professional development and ongoing, job-embedded coaching where needed, as identified through observations.		School leadership has identified a clear instructional focus or shared expectations for instructional best practices that address student-specific instructional needs as identified through a deliberate review of data and classroom observations throughout the school. These core instructional practices are supported through targeted professional development and ongoing, job-embedded coaching.

Component D. Administrative Observations Leading to Constructive, Teacher-Specific Feedback, Supports, and Professional Development
There is a well-defined and professionally valued system for monitoring and enhancing classroom-based instruction across the school and for individual teachers. The system includes frequent observations of instructional practice and the impact of instruction in student work, team-based and job-embedded professional development, and teacher-specific coaching when needed.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
There is infrequent or limited monitoring of classroom-based instruction across grades, content areas, and at the teacher level. Monitoring is not benchmarked or aligned with a clear set of expected instructional practices and does not include teacher-specific feedback and expectations given by both administrators and coaches where relevant.	Administrators and instructional coaches are monitoring classroom-based instruction at the school- and teacher-level and there are **some** instances of teacher-to-teacher peer observations and learning. However, monitoring may not be aligned with expected instructional practices, frequent enough to address instructional gaps, or include useful teacher-specific feedback.		Administration has put into place a deliberate and formal system for monitoring and enhancing classroom-based instruction that may also include opportunities for teacher-to-teacher peer observations and sharing of best practice. This system includes a continuous monitoring of classroom-based instruction and student work against a clear set of expected instructional practices and targeted teacher-specific feedback that teachers feel is useful and effective in improving their classroom instruction.

Component E. Teachers and Teacher Teams use Student Data to Adapt and Improve Instructional Strategies
Teachers use and analyze a variety of student-specific data to assess the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and practices and modify instruction to meet their students' needs as identified.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
There is some collection of student achievement data but the school lacks standards-based common or benchmark assessments. Data is reviewed by a few teachers and/or administrators, but it is not part of an organized and deliberate process to review the impact of instruction and improve lessons and instruction.	Most to all grade-levels and content areas have access to or collect both standards-based assessment and performance assessments linked to learning objectives. *Use of data is evident but (**few / some**)* teachers or teacher teams use data to refine and improve instruction.		There is a highly organized system for frequently collecting and deliberately reviewing both formal and informal data to directly inform teachers' weekly and even daily revisions and refinement to instruction. Teachers and teacher teams adapt and revise standards-based instructional strategies, lessons, and curricula in direct response to student need based on frequent assessment of student work and learning.

Finding Statement #6	Finding Statement #7
Leaders, teachers, and students use content and competency assessments to identify areas for improvement and related supports.	The school has a deliberate and flexible approach to providing tiered academic and non-academic interventions and supports to all students.

All stakeholders, including students, described specific processes and mechanisms that: a) allow teachers to clearly identify students' needs; b) encourage students to set goals and have the time to work toward these goals; and c) ensure that teachers and interventionists provide targeted small group and individual support to all students. As noted in Turnaround Practice #2, the Mentor/Mentee system and extensive use of data through the Summit Learning platform provides the foundation for a robust system of tiered interventions and supports. Additionally, leaders and teachers described the following features of the master schedule to facilitate this work:

- **A daily Mentoring period**: All academic teachers have a set of students (in their grade) with whom they work as mentees. This period provides time for the teacher mentor to work with each student and to review and set goals related to academic (content and cognitive) and non-academic issues. Students described setting "SMART" goals based on their own data.
- **A daily Self-Directed Learning (SDL) period:** Each day students use this time to work on projects, homework, studying and notetaking, and other work directly related to the goals they set with their mentor teacher. Leadership characterized this as a highly structured and purposeful individualized work time. A review of the school's handbook shows clear expectations for student work and behavior during the SDL. Teachers and students consistently noted the importance and usefulness of this time. Teachers also noted that SDL might be used by a teacher or interventionist to provide small-group workshop, as determined by the team during CPT.
- **A daily Intervention/enrichment block:** As the last period of the day, this time is used to provide enrichment, interventions, and as a reward for students. During the week, students are flexibly grouped in enrichments or with staff (i.e., interventionist, guidance) depending on their needs, as determined by data and the grade-level team. Some interventions/enrichments last for 6-to-8 weeks, after which students are regrouped depending on need and progress. Depending on students' academic progress (e.g., meeting their goals) during the week, students have the opportunity for a "free-period" on Friday called the Red/Green block. Students described encouraging their classmates to finish their work (to meet their goals) so that they could participate in Friday activities.

Teachers described using their CPT to carefully review student progress on a weekly basis. Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data are used to inform initial identification of students' needs. Throughout the year, teachers described using the Focus Area Content Assessments (e.g., quizzes) embedded in each project, cognitive skills measured through common rubrics, and end-of-unit assessments to directly inform the development of content workshops and individual work with each mentee student. Leaders, teachers, and students noted that all this information is housed and accessed through the Summit Data Dashboard. The interventionist participates in CPT and co-develops targeted supports for students. Also, teachers reported, and documents presented, a list of academic and cognitive interventions, process steps, and actions for a wide range of student needs and/or trends that may arise through teachers' analysis of data. Teachers described using specific data review protocols during CPT. School leaders and teachers stated they have not yet begun to systematically review which interventions may best help individual students.

Leaders and teachers also stated that the SST meets weekly to identify supports for students not responding to the supports provided through the processes described above. The SST includes leadership, guidance, and the school adjustment counselor. Leaders and teachers explained that teachers, with the support of leadership,

interventionists, and the school adjustment counselor, are actively addressing students' academic and non-academic needs through the above-described systems.

TP3. Providing Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students: The school provides student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs.

Component F. Using Data to Identify Student-Specific Academic and Non-Academic Needs
Administrators and teachers use a variety of ongoing assessments (formative, benchmark, and summative) to frequently and continually identify students' individual academic needs (e.g., content or standard-specific academic needs) in order to provide student-specific interventions and supports.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
The school does not have or actively use a variety of valid and reliable standards-based assessments to identify specific students needing additional support and their targeted areas of need.	The school does have a variety of valid and reliable standards-based assessments capable of identifying students and content-specific needs. The school has **(few/some)** teaming structures, protocols, and systems intended to support the collection and use of data by teachers regarding interventions. A **(few/some)** teachers and teacher teams are using data to inform lesson planning and interventions.		There is a highly organized school-level system for collecting and deliberately reviewing reliable standards-based assessments that is: (a) **frequent** enough to assure that students needing support are equitably identified and supported and are meeting the same rigorous standards and (b) **routine in classrooms** so that students receive supports in a timely fashion. Teachers and teacher teams actively use data to inform lesson planning and refine classroom-based instruction and targeted interventions and responses benefitting each student.

Component G. Providing Targeted Interventions and Supports to Students and Monitoring for Effectiveness
The school employs a system (structures, practices, and use of resources) for providing targeted instructional interventions and supports to all students, including the ongoing monitoring of the impact of tiered interventions and the ability to adapt and modify the school's structures and resources (e.g., time, staff, schedules) to provide interventions to students throughout the year.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
Tiered interventions and supports are not available or provided to many students needing support. Teachers may be using academic interventions and students may be receiving non-academic support, but leaders/teachers may not have the capacity or time to review the impact of interventions and supports on students.	The school has a system of tiered interventions and supports for students. Decision-making processes and teaming processes result in **some** students being effectively identified and provided student-specific classroom-based and tiered academic or non-academic support. Leadership or teacher teams review student data to identify supports, but the data may be limited or appropriate interventions and supports may not be available.		A deliberate system of tiered and evidence-based interventions and student support is in place so that each student that needs support is provided with appropriate classroom-based and tiered academic and non-academic support. Administrators and teachers actively use data to monitor and assess the impact of interventions and supports. Administrators modify schedules and staffing to ensure the provision of tiered interventions and non-academic support.

Finding Statement #8	Finding Statement #9	Finding Statement #10
Leaders and teachers have established shared expectations for student conduct and teacher-student interactions resulting in a positive learning environment for students and teachers.	The school has established systems and teaming structures that directly support students in becoming independent and responsible learners and that also builds positive relationships among students and adults.	The school has established a climate of respectful, collegial relationships, which has led to a positive school culture focused on a collective effort to increase student achievement throughout the school.

Leaders and teachers reported that supporting students with social-emotional and related issues has been a priority this year, given the return of students to full-time in-person school. During the first few weeks of the school year, teachers described spending considerable time sharing, reviewing, and having students "sign-off" on expectations related to behavior, academics, and other aspects of the school's approach to instruction. The school's handbook includes precise and detailed descriptions of "expectations, procedures, systems, and structures" that codify expectations for nearly every aspect of the school. The school uses a PBIS expectation matrix and related strategies. Teachers described going over this information in detail at the beginning of the year. Similarly, students reported participating in orientation or training on the use of the Summit Learning Platform and expectations related to goal-setting and expected behavior during instructional time, SDL periods, and in hallways. Leaders, teachers, and students reported that there is a great student-to-staff culture, due, in part, to the Mentor/Mentee program and the ongoing support that students receive from teachers. In terms of behavior, nearly all observed classrooms demonstrated effective behavioral expectations and a supportive learning environment (see Section III, Summary of Classroom Observation Data). For instance, the site visit team observed students actively engaged in class, orderly transitions, positive teacher-to- student interactions, and little-to-no in-class disruptions or use of cell phones by students or teachers. Teachers reported that relationship-building has been a major success through the mentoring program. However, leadership noted that there is still work to do, given that some students come to school with a great deal of anxiety and may not have sufficient support from home. Making sure that students are safe and secure at school is a priority for leaders and teachers.

Teachers described their lesson plan structure as part of their approach to classroom management. Ensuring that all classrooms have a similar structure (i.e., use of similar Whiteboard configurations) and flow (i.e., starting with a do-now, using similar routines, emphasizing respect for others) is, according to teachers, infused into daily lessons. Teachers and students described common behavioral practices, such as using a red-yellow-green ticket chart for students (wiped clean each day) and a reward system (devil dollars). Leaders reported that students are familiar with zones-of-regulation language and processes used in the elementary school and that the middle school builds on this through the processes listed above. Further, students described the Friday Red-Green day as a positive incentive; students described how they encourage their colleagues to meet their goals so that friend groups are able to spend time together on Friday. Leaders described the Friday Red-Green day as a strategic mid-course adjustment intended to continue to increase positive student morale and spirit. In addition to the Mentor/Mentee program that provides students with explicit choice and voice, leaders and students also described opportunities for students to share their voice through student council and as part of daily lessons that include choices related to how they complete projects.

Leaders, teachers, and students described how various components of the school—the Mentor/Mentee program, goal setting, teachers' collective analysis of data, strategic use of SDL time, and consistent instructional and classroom management practices—work together to cultivate positive relationships and a school environment conducive to learning and student ownership of their work. For instance, teachers' collective use of student-specific data to support goal-setting and targeted support is evidence of shared responsibility for students. Students' descriptions of goal setting, their perceived usefulness of SDL time, and voiced knowledge of what it takes to reach mastery demonstrates a collective effort to increase student achievement.

Furthermore, leadership clearly supports these efforts and described multiple systems, now codified in a detailed handbook, which were observed as being implemented with fidelity across the school.

TP4. School Climate and Culture: The school has established a climate and culture that provides a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement.

Component H. Shared Behavioral Expectations that Support Student Learning

Administrators and teachers have clearly established, and actively reinforce, expectations for student conduct and behavior that supports students' learning and efforts to increase student achievement.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
Clear expectations for student conduct and behavior and the related practices to support such behaviors have not been clearly established or pursued by staff throughout the school building.	Administrators have established **(few/some; general/specific)** expectations for student conduct and behavior, but these expectations are not consistently adopted, implemented, and upheld throughout the school and across all classrooms **(few/some)**. Administrative and teachers' responses to student behavior may be shared but are not consistently applied across the entire school.		Administrators and teachers have established clear expectations for student conduct and behavior and use consistent practices—responses and positive actions—that reinforce expectations throughout the school building. The school community (administrators, staff, students, families, and the district) uses practices that reflect and reinforce positive student conduct, and these practices are consistently implemented, assessed, and refined to ensure a safe, orderly and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers.

Component I. Targeted and Effective Social-Emotional Supports

The school has identified, established, and proactively provides effective social-emotional resources and supports for students in need of such supports and assistance.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
The school has yet to identify, establish, or proactively provide students with an array of social-emotional supports and assistance for those needing such assistance.	The school has identified a limited **(few/some)** set of resources and supports to assist students identified with social-emotional needs and the array of resources and supports, while serving **few/some)** students does not serve all students and their specific needs.		The school has identified, established, and proactively provides a clearly established array of effective social-emotional resources and supports for students identified in need of such supports and assistance. The school frequently monitors and/or assesses the impact of social-emotional supports to inform decision-making at the classroom, school and district level.

Component J. Establishing a Collegial, Respectful, and Trusting Professional Environment

A climate of respectful and collegial communication, relationships, and a positive school culture has been established by leaders, teachers, and students, allowing for a positive, productive, and collective effort to increase student achievement throughout the school.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
A climate of respectful collegial communication, relationships, and leadership has yet to be established throughout the school.	Expectations for collegial communication, relationships, and leadership has been communicated but is only clearly evident in a **(few/some)** of actions and interactions across **(few/some)** staff throughout the building.		A climate of respectful collegial communication, relationships, and leadership has clearly been established and is evident through the modeling of clear expectations and identified practices by leadership, teacher leaders, and teachers throughout the school building allowing for a positive and productive effort to increase student achievement throughout the school.

Consistent, Aligned, Rigorous, and Culturally Proficient Instructional Practices.

The school is using tightly aligned and consistent curricula, assessments, and common instructional practices – vertically- and horizontally-aligned curricula and instructional strategies that include common units, lessons, assessments, and instructional strategies and language within and across grades and content areas – that will ensure that all students have access to content, instruction, and learning tools necessary to take, and succeed in, advanced and college-level coursework. Students know what is expected in each class and can employ similar learning strategies across content areas and over multiple years.

Initial	Low Developing	High Developing	Robust
The school has limited structures for teachers to develop and maintain vertical alignment of curriculum or progression of instruction in individual schools or across schools. **Most or all teachers develop units and lessons on their own**, with limited expectations to develop, use, and refine common and culturally proficient instructional strategies used within and across grades. **Many course scope and sequences (and related units) are not fully aligned with grade-level standards** and lessons often include the use of teacher-specific instructional strategies and academic language. **Many courses are insufficiently rigorous and do not include culturally proficient instructional strategies** needed to provide students with the knowledge and skill needed for the following year.	Formal meeting structures are established so that teachers have regular opportunities to collaborate and plan vertically and horizontally (cross-content) within their school. Teacher teams have developed aligned units and lessons and incorporate culturally proficient instructional strategies into lessons. Teachers and teacher teams develop course scope and sequences that are aligned across grade spans, between elementary school and middle school, and middle school and high school, and that use common instructional strategies. Most courses are standards-based and sufficiently rigorous (including the use of culturally proficient instructional strategies) as needed to prepare students with the knowledge and skill needed for the following year.	Formal meeting structures are established for teachers to develop and maintain vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum and instruction in their school <u>and</u> across schools (e.g., among middle schools, or between middle and high school). **Most to all teachers use these meeting structures to collaboratively develop common units and lessons** based on a vertically-aligned scope and sequence. Unit and lesson plans directly link lesson content with standards in previous, current, and subsequent grades and include common and culturally proficient instructional strategies, academic language, questioning techniques, and other learning tools that **provide all students with a differentiated and consistent set of tools to access content and engage in learning.**

III. SUMMARY OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION DATA

During the site visit, the team conducted 12 observations, representing a range of grade levels and subject areas. The following table presents the compiled data from those observations.

	Indicator	Distribution of Scores % Ineffective (1) → % Effective (4)			
		1	2	3	4
Common Core Implementation	**Common Core Literacy Implementation (for ELA classes only)** Content standards implementation Instructional shifts implementation N = 4	0%	25%	0%	75%
	Common Core Math Implementation (for math classes only) Content standards implementation Instructional shifts implementation Standards for mathematical practice implementation N = 3	0%	0%	33%	67%
	Common Core Literacy Shift Implementation (for all classes other than ELA and math) Common Core literacy shifts implementation N =5	0%	20%	20%	60%
Classroom Climate	**2. Behavioral Expectations** Clear expectations Consistent rewards and/or consequences Anticipation and redirection of misbehavior	0%	0%	25%	75%
	3. Structured Learning Environment Teacher preparation Learning time maximized	0%	0%	42%	58%
	4. Supportive Environment Caring relationships Teacher responsiveness to students' non-academic needs	0%	0%	8%	92%
Purposeful Teaching	**5. Focused Instruction** Learning objective that drives all lesson activities Effective communication of academic content High expectations	0%	8%	25%	67%
	6. Instructional Strategies Multisensory modalities and materials Instructional Format Student choice	0%	8%	33%	58%
	7. Participation and Engagement Active student participation Strategies to increase participation	0%	0%	42%	58%
	8. Higher-order Thinking Challenging tasks Application to new problems and situations Justify thinking or reasoning	0%	25%	42%	33%
In-Class Assessment & Feedback	**9. Assessment Strategies** Use of formative assessments Alignment to academic content or lesson objective	0%	25%	42%	33%
	10. Feedback Clear, specific, and actionable Clarifies misunderstanding or provides guidance	0%	42%	17%	42%

The site visit team met with Murdock Middle School's leadership team to review its findings, discuss the school's areas of strengths and areas for improvement, prioritize areas for improvement, and discuss ways to address the identified areas for improvement.

The team then developed the following goal, success measure, and action plans for TWO findings/areas:

Goal: To develop and implement an effective system of tiered interventions, implementation, and assessment.

Success Measure: All action steps will be completed by November 2022.

Actions	Target Dates	Champions
1. Team Development	5/18/22	Dean of Students and Special Education Teacher/ILT member
2. Common tracking sheet, identification process, data	5/19/22	Dean of Students
3. List of interventions, assessment, tracking process	6/3/22	Principal and Math Interventionist
4. Complete protocol (ABCs of PDCS – for headings/content to include)	6/17/22	Math Interventionist
5. Roll out	First week of SY 22-23	Computer Technology Teacher/ILT member
6. Evaluate process	11/1/22	ILT/CPT reps

Goal: Teachers receive feedback on a regular basis

Success Measure: All action steps will be completed by November 2022.

Actions	Target Dates	Champions
1. Modify protocols and rubrics/presentation	6/17/22	Coaches
2. Schedule/calendar	8/19/22	Coaches and Principal

3. Share vision/purpose
   a. Broad overview
   b. Team meetings
   c. Supporting evidence
	8/29/22	Coaches

4. Communicate schedule	8/29/22	Coaches
5. Model/create video of exemplar (easy and difficult conversations)	8/19/22	Coaches
6. Coaching cycle #1	10/12/22	Coaches
7. Feedback surveys	8/19/22 to 10/31/22	Coaches/ILT

8. Monitor coaching for effectiveness	November 2022 ongoing	Coaches/ILT
9. Train new coaches	5/23	7/8 ELA ILT Teacher and 7/8 Science ITL Teacher

The Targeted Site Visit to Murdock Middle School was conducted on May 16-17, 2022, by a team of educators and researchers from SchoolWorks, LLC and Institute for Strategic Leadership and Learning (INSTLL).

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[i] Lane, B., Unger, C., & Stein, L. (2016). *2016 Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide: A Research-Based Guide Designed to Support District and School Leaders Engaged in School Turnaround Efforts.* Prepared for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.