

Improving Our Schools: Mid-Year Progress on Strategic Goals

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LOWELL

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Key Initiatives & Goals

- **New model for Professional Learning that connects district Curriculum & Student Support Departments directly to teachers**
- **Development of a new 5-year Strategic Plan for LPS**
- **Implement Cycles of Continuous Improvement and Quarterly Check of Progress for school-based Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs)**
- **Enhanced Instructional Rounds with focus areas for curriculum implementation and instructional quality**
- **Leadership professional learning targeted to the District Prioritization Plan focus on language practices across content areas**
- **Supporting Lowell High School with new ELA & Math curriculum implementation in grades 9 & 10, expanded Portrait of a Graduate work on cognitive rigor, a grant submission to DESE to for three Chapter 74 programs at LHS in the Fall of 2026, and the development of a new schedule for Lowell High School**

District Goals

1.3 Portrait of a Graduate

- A. Implement the next phase of Portrait of a Graduate work to include shifting the cognitive lift from teacher to student, which includes professional learning activities to strengthen teachers' belief systems about equity and student capacity and instructional techniques to elevate student discourse
- B. Establish three Chapter 74 Programs for Lowell High School to debut in the 2026-2027 school year by completing DESE applications, building out career-connected learning pathways for students, budgeting, and staffing for the programs, and creating marketing materials for prospective and current students
- C. Develop a new school schedule for Lowell High School to implement in SY 2025-2026 that includes longer blocks for core classes to support deeper learning in core content classes and career-connected learning in CTE, Pathways, and Early College classes.

District Goals

1.4 Data-Driven Decision Making

- A. Implement Cycles of Continuous Improvement (CCI) as part of principal coaching and Leadership Academy
- B. Establish a process for conducting quarterly checks of progress toward QIP KPIs with each school's ILT and Site Council and adjusting action steps in response to outcomes
- C. Develop a new Strategic Plan for the Lowell Public Schools using a collaborative process involving staff, students, families, and community partners that contains specific goals for improving outcomes in literacy, math, and science for students and closing opportunity gaps for marginalized populations.

District Goals

1.5 Differentiated Autonomy and Support:

- A. Implement a new model for Professional Learning to bring central office curriculum and support staff into schools weekly for on-site Collaborative Planning Time meetings that are aligned to support both district initiatives (i.e. curriculum implementation and literacy review) and school QIP goals.
- B. Implement two new curricular series at Lowell High School for grades 9 and 10 in English, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry that are rated as High-Quality Instructional Materials by DESE to increase alignment to standards and performance outcomes for students in Math and ELA.
- C. Provide professional development to leaders in a train-the-trainer model to support the District Prioritization Plan to strengthen Tier 1 language practices across all grades and content areas, with a focus on supporting students who are well below grade level on district assessments.

Improving Our Schools:

Portrait of a Graduate Focus on Cognitive
Rigor & School Redesign



Instructional Focus



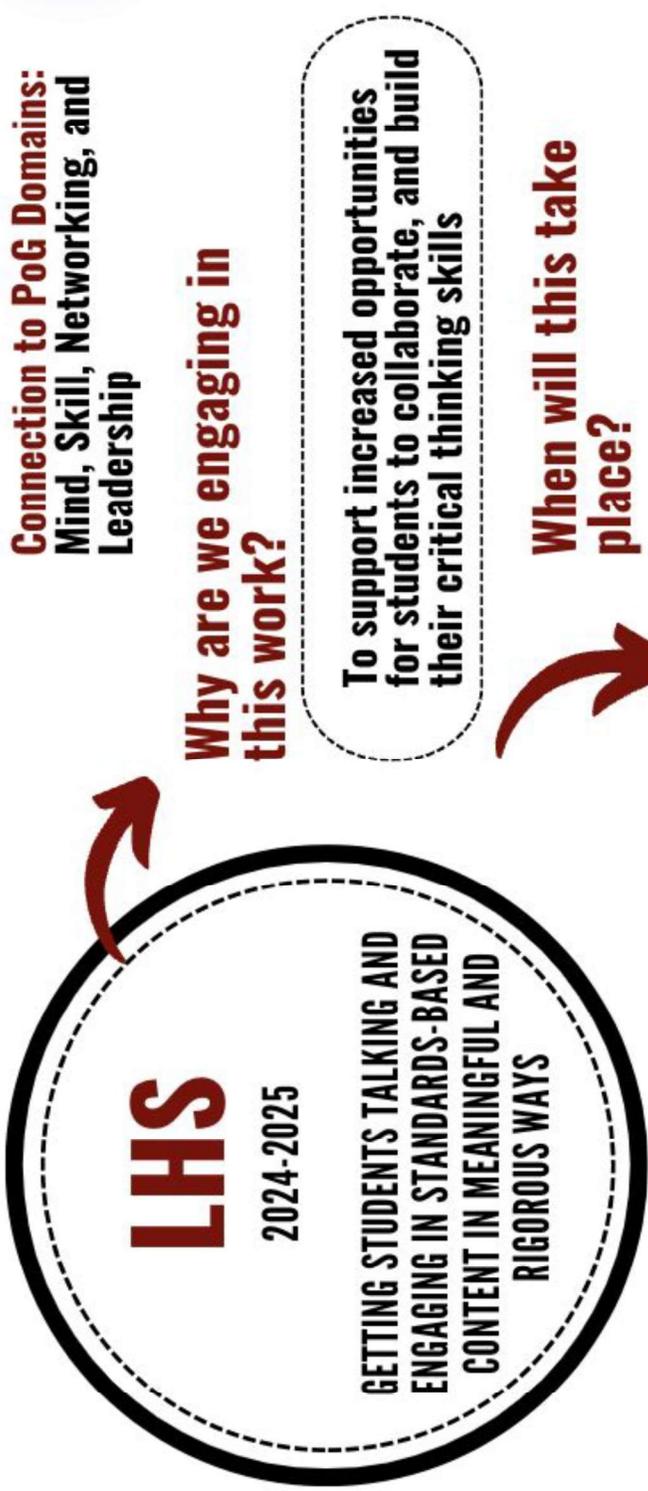
**Together
We
Achieve**

Timeline of Action Steps: Discourse

- **Spring 2024:** All Department Chairs trained in CCRTL Binder Study
- **August 2024:** LHS Instructional Focus launched with full staff
- **September 2024:**
 - 10 POG Leads hired
 - LASW Protocol adapted to create “Everyday” LASW version in addition to the LASW model created last year that spans across a 3-week period. Having two models allows flexibilities for departments and PLCS depending on the time they have together.
- **October 2024:**
 - POG leads began Binder Study and Coaching Cadre with CCRTL
 - Data Summit and Goal Setting across building with models for each department to adopt goals based on this year’s Instructional Focus

Timeline of Action Steps: Discourse

- **November:**
 - POG Leads continued with Binder Study and Coaching Cadre
- **December:**
 - Discourse Stroll during Early Release: POG Leads lead sessions modeling Discourse strategies for staff, over 90% of staff rated the session as highly effective.
 - Learning Lunches and Coffee Talks lead by POG leads
- **January:**
 - Early Release PD: All staff will take part in Session 1 of the Binder Study, we are holding a Learning Lunch ahead of the PD for staff interested in taking part in the full Binder Study. We will also be holding a second Discourse Stroll to continue modeling discourse strategies. The Binder Study and Discourse Stroll will be led by POG leads.
- **Next steps:**
 - We will follow-up with Discourse strategies in all departments during PLC and Department meetings throughout Semester 2
 - WE are offering Binder Study 1 for all interested
 - For those that completed Binder Study 1, we are offering Binder Study 2 this spring as well. POG leads will go through this and complete another round of the Coaching Cadre.



**Connection to PoG Domains:
Mind, Skill, Networking, and
Leadership**

**Why are we engaging in
this work?**

To support increased opportunities for students to collaborate, and build their critical thinking skills



**When will this take
place?**

**Professional Development:
Co-led by teachers and admin during
Early Release and PLC meetings**



**How will we measure
success?**

Metrics have been set within our **LHS QIP** (Quality Improvement Plan) and PoG Grant and

Centering the work around **TEACHERS**:

- The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Binder Study was chosen as the focus for our Professional Development on Discourse because of the input and positive experiences of LHS teachers that participated in it last year.
- The plan for implementing this year's work around Discourse strategies and LASW was created in calibration with LHS teachers this summer.
- Professional Development this year will be co-led by LHS teachers and Admin.



School Wide Instructional Focus & Goal Setting

Professional Practice Goal

Getting Students Talking and Engaging:

- Dr. Hollie's Discourse Strategies

Standards Based Content:

- Implementation of HQIM
- Curriculum work in WL, Health, & PE

In Meaningful and Rigorous Ways:

- LASW Protocol
- Lesson Internalization

Student Learning Goal

How do we measure the impact of this work?

MCAS

ACCESS

Course Grades

Common Assessment Data



DECEMBER

Discourse Stroll

Name	Room #	Department	CCRTL Strategy
Amanda Ernst	D2008	Social Studies	Thinking on your Feet and Wheel of Names (Movement) 1-2-4 Strategy, Whip Around, and \$2.00 Summary (Collaboration)
Michelle Lee	D2009	Math	Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down Give One, Get One, Move On Who's the Spy Voting with your feet
Sophia Marsden	D2010	English	Hot seat, moment of silence, musical shares, somebody who
Patti Adams	D2013	Science	Campfire, Turn and Talk and Roll Em
Jacqui Hoffman	D2016	English	Stop & Scribble, mix-pair-share
Amy Woo	D2018	MLE	Four corners
Emily Steinberg	D2023	Science	Turn and Talk, Keyword Notes, \$2.00 Summary, Snowball
Wayne Taylor	D3008	Business	Think-Pair-Share, Gallery Walk, Pick a stick
Shelby Coe	D3010	English	Whip Around, Graffiti Talk, Musical Shares, Train/Pass It On
Clara Cahill	D3016	Science	stop and scribble and train / pass it on.
Connor Malek	D3018	English	Quiz Quiz Trade
Belinda Smith	D3023	Science	Snowball, Give one Get one (Variation)
Amy Burnell	D3027	Health	Carousel Brainstorm, Spokesperson



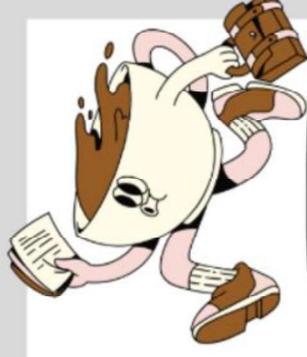
TUESDAY 12-10
 MUSICAL SHARES WITH
 EMILY STEINBERG!
ROOM D2023



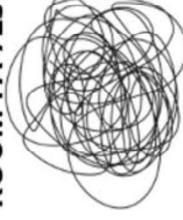
WEDNESDAY 12-11
 SNOWBALL WITH
 CONNOR MALEKI!
ROOM D4010



DISCOURSE COFFEE TALKS DECEMBER 10-12, 2024



THURSDAY 12-12
 STOP AND SCRIBBLE WITH
 JACQUI HOFFMAN!
ROOM FA 723



DO YOU LIKE COFFEE,
 DONUTS, AND
 GETTING YOUR
 STUDENTS TALKING?

JOIN US FROM 7:15-
 7:40 AM IN THE
 LISTED LOCATIONS
 TO ENJOY COFFEE
 AND LEARN
 SOMETHING NEW!

**WANT EVEN MORE?!
 STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFO
 ABOUT LEARNING LUNCHES!**



Chapter 74 Program Application Update

Following 14 months of committee work, collaboration with a Chapter 74 consulting expert and local technical high schools, and working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the team at LHS submitted the initial application (Part A) to DESE for two new Chapter 74 programs on November 15, 2024. The initial programs are Criminal Justice and Information Support Services & Networking (ISSN/cybersecurity). We are also seeking to relaunch our Marketing program.

An important next step in launching all these programs is having an approved admission process. A proposal for this process has been submitted for School Committee consideration. The team continues to work with consultant Roger Bourgeois to complete the second phase of the application process (Part B) that will be submitted once prompted to do so by DESE. We are also excited to be offering a Criminal Justice class this Spring. This class will be run in collaboration with the Lowell Police Department and will be a great addition to our Criminal Justice (Public Safety) pathway, once approved.

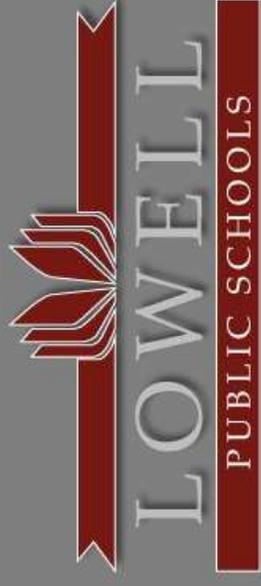
**DESE is in the process of changing the Criminal Justice Pathway to a Public Safety pathway that focuses more heavily on preparing students for first responder roles within the community.*

LHS Schedule Development Update

A Scheduling Team has been convened since last school year engaging in a feasibility study, supported by consultants from The Learning Agenda as part of our work on Portrait of a Graduate. A grant from the Barr Foundation provides financial support for this work. Due to the complexities of the Lowell High School construction project and delays with the state's response on Chapter 74 programming, we have adjusted our implementation timeline for a new schedule to August of 2026.

The Scheduling Team has developed some preliminary options and will work with an expert consultant, Michele Phillips, to complete the build out of a new schedule over the next 12-14 months and develop communication materials to share broadly with the LHS school community and other stakeholders regarding the redesign process, innovations, and alignment with other ongoing school initiatives.

Improving Our Schools: Data-Driven Decision Making





Cycles of Continuous Improvement

Key Data Indicators

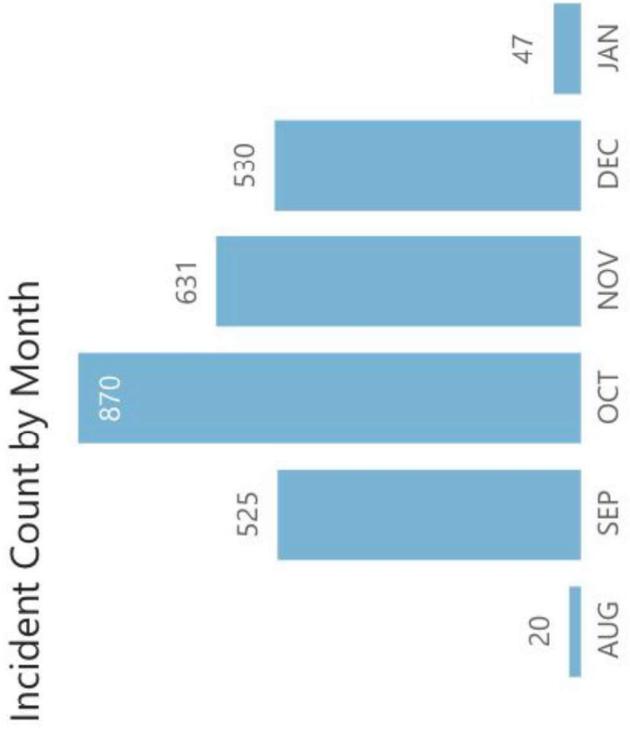
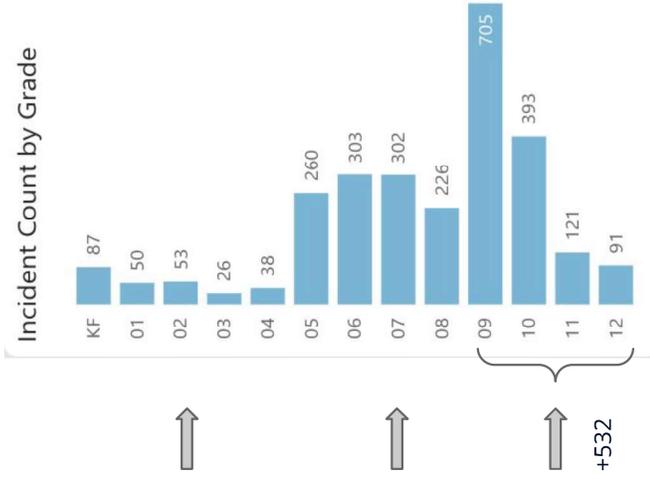
Attendance (as of 1/5/25)

Chronic Absence Rate (full year)
19.2%
 - 0.2% vs. previous year

Attendance Rate YTD
93.4%
 - 0.2% vs. previous YTD

Conduct Tracking (as of 1/5/25)

- Defiance/Disrespect & Insubordination





Section 5: Quarterly Progress Monitoring Review

5.1 2024-2025 Quarter 1

Goal	Status	Progress Notes <i>(Actions Completed, Actions Remaining, Challenges, Successes)</i>	KPI Data
<p>1: Year 1 Performance Objective: CLSP: Create an environment where all students, staff and families feel welcome and valued.</p>	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all belong training completed with staff 8.26 Staff trainings scheduled with equity department and on PD calendar for 3 additional trainings Informational slides created to increase understanding of diverse experiences and shared with staff for use in morning meetings Outreach to families to increase diversity of PTO and Site Council Bias in curriculum training scheduled for December Many families attended open house and/or Spanish Affinity group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of staff attended We belong training 49% of families attended open house and/or affinity group PTO attendance reflects student population - 80% of parents were non-native English speakers Site Council membership reflects parent population - 40% white, 40% Latino, 20% Asian
<p>2: Year 1 Performance Objective: Build capacity of teachers and families to co-lead in planning and decision-making in the best</p>	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly CPT meetings are occurring - ILT members have not yet facilitated one ICT meets bi-weekly and plans all school professional development, including targeted coaching cycles October early release was used for math vertical meetings to unpack place value standards and plan next steps Staff have begun "Building Thinking Classrooms in Math" book study - first three chapters have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTO attendance reflects student population - 80% of parents were non-native English speakers Site Council membership reflects parent population - 40% white, 40% Latino, 20% Asian Math vertical

New QIP Quarterly Checks of Progress

20 Strategic Planning



Performance data analysis

Review of key organizational data to identify areas of strength, weakness and opportunity

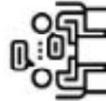
Attuned reviewed data provided by Lowell Public Schools and publicly available performance data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and other national publications.



Instructional quality review

Quality and equity assessment of specific instructional practices and structures

Attuned reviewed instructional artifacts as well as conducted in-person visits to observe lessons in 76 classrooms in May 2023 and 56 classrooms in September / October 2024 that spanned grade levels and content areas.



Constituent perspectives

Surveys and interviews with community, staff and others to collect perspectives on the system's strengths and challenges

Attuned interviewed 8 system / school leaders and 1 school committee member, and held 5 unique focus groups with students (2 high school groups), family members, teachers, and school leaders.

We also shared a survey with all stakeholders and received 2,125 responses including 422 from students, 998 from family members, and 649 from school staff and leaders.



Org Diagnostic Report

Key findings were synthesized into this detailed report covering the organization's strengths and challenges across the following areas:

- ▶ Student population and outcomes
- ▶ Equity-centered vision, plan and monitoring
- ▶ Student culture and well-being
- ▶ Curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- ▶ Family and community engagement
- ▶ Talent management, development, and well-being
- ▶ Operations, finance, and facilities



Executive Summary

Key strengths

- **Inclusive and Engaging Environment:** LPS was recognized for fostering an inclusive atmosphere that supported students and families from all backgrounds, and staff affirmed district leaders' commitment to advancing equity across schools. Classroom culture also consistently supported learning, with three-quarters of students actively engaged in lessons.
- **Dedicated and Compassionate Staff:** LPS staff were celebrated for their skill, experience, and deep commitment to student success. Retention rates were strong, consistently surpassing state and peer averages. The new district leadership team was also appreciated for its inclusive approach, improved communication, and clear dedication to positive student outcomes.
- **Community, Opportunities, and Belonging:** High school students reported a strong sense of belonging, and families and students appreciated the wide range of extracurricular and athletic opportunities available across the district. Families, especially those of color, were likely to recommend LPS to others.
- **Academic Achievement Compared to Peer Districts:** In 23-24, Lowell Public Schools Grade 10 ELA and math proficiency rates were the highest among district peers, and LPS outperformed all district peers in Math and all but one in ELA proficiency for Grades 3-8.
- **Improving Attendance and School Culture:** Chronic absenteeism has dropped by 15 points since 2021-22, with LPS rates now better than peers and within 5% of statewide rates. Suspension rates have also decreased, indicating positive strides toward a supportive school culture that prioritizes student well-being.



Executive Summary

Key Gaps

- **Performance Gaps and Support for Special Populations:** Wide disparities in academic outcomes persisted across student subgroups, with Latino, multilingual, high-needs students, and students with disabilities underperforming in key areas like SAT Math, MCAS proficiency, and advanced course participation. Stakeholders also seek enhanced resources for diverse learners, especially for multilingual learners and students with autism.
- **Declining Graduation and College Readiness:** On-time graduation rates declined by 7 points since 2019-20, falling behind state averages, while college matriculation rates dropped by 10 points. Large gaps in both metrics were evident between student subgroups.
- **Curriculum Consistency and Rigor:** High-quality curriculum has been adopted in some subjects, yet gaps remain in K-8 ELA, with stakeholders calling for alignment with the science of reading. Observations also revealed inconsistent instructional rigor, with many classrooms not meeting grade-level standards.
- **Equity and Strategic Focus Concerns:** Although LPS aimed to advance equity, some staff shared deficit-based perspectives on student potential, and many felt overwhelmed by numerous initiatives. There was also a desire for greater staff involvement in decision-making.
- **Significant Variability Across Schools:** Academic outcomes varied considerably across schools. Family perceptions of student belonging and feeling welcome, as well as staff experiences of belonging, also varied widely across schools, underscoring the need for more consistent, equitable school climates.
- **Staff Diversity:** With only 18% of staff identifying as people of color, compared to 79% of students, stakeholders emphasized the need for a workforce that better reflects the student body's diversity.
- **Operations, Systems, and Facilities:** Stakeholders sought improved communication between central office and schools, more reliable and affordable transportation, and significant facility upgrades, particularly in ventilation and air conditioning. There was also a call for more equitable and transparent school placement and registration processes.





Strategic Plan Next Steps

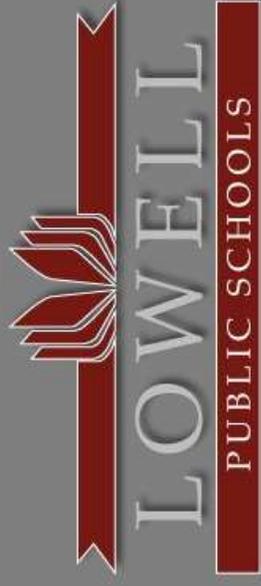
Phase 4: Drafting the Plan

This will be the longest working phase of the plan, with a preliminary/draft report projected for readiness by late March 2025.

Phase 5: Progress Monitoring and Early Implementation

This phase is projected to begin in early April and will see the implementation of the plan following approval by the School Committee.

Improving Our Schools: Differentiated Autonomy & Support



New Professional Learning Model Pilot

Overarching Objectives:

- Create a culture of shared support and accountability for improving student outcomes between school and district personnel
- Provide multi-tiered system of continuous learning and support for educators that includes:
 - Regular opportunities for teachers and district personnel to engage in discussions about academics, instruction, equity, and student support (Tier 1)
 - Opportunities to partner with district personnel for extended PD time (i.e. data summits, early release day PD facilitation, coaching) through a request system (Tier 2)
 - Focused instructional rounds and additional support for schools that are part of the Statewide System of Support (Tier 3)
- Provide PD in a fiscally-responsible way that keeps teachers in the classroom with students more frequently vs. a heavy full-day/substitute-dependent model

New Professional Learning Model Pilot- Tier 2

School personnel now use a simple Google Form to request additional support/PD from a district provider.



PD/Training
Additional PD Request

Select date range

Level Equals

Total

53

Actioned

43

Pending

9

Subject Area	Count
SCI/SS	24
MLE	13
ELA	8
Health	4
CLSP	2
DATA	1

Subject Area	Percentage
SCI/SS	45.3%
MLE	24.5%
ELA	15.1%
Health	7.5%
CLSP	3.8%
DATA	3.8%

Location	Count
My school	24
District	10
My students	9
My team	5
Just me	4
My school and other	1

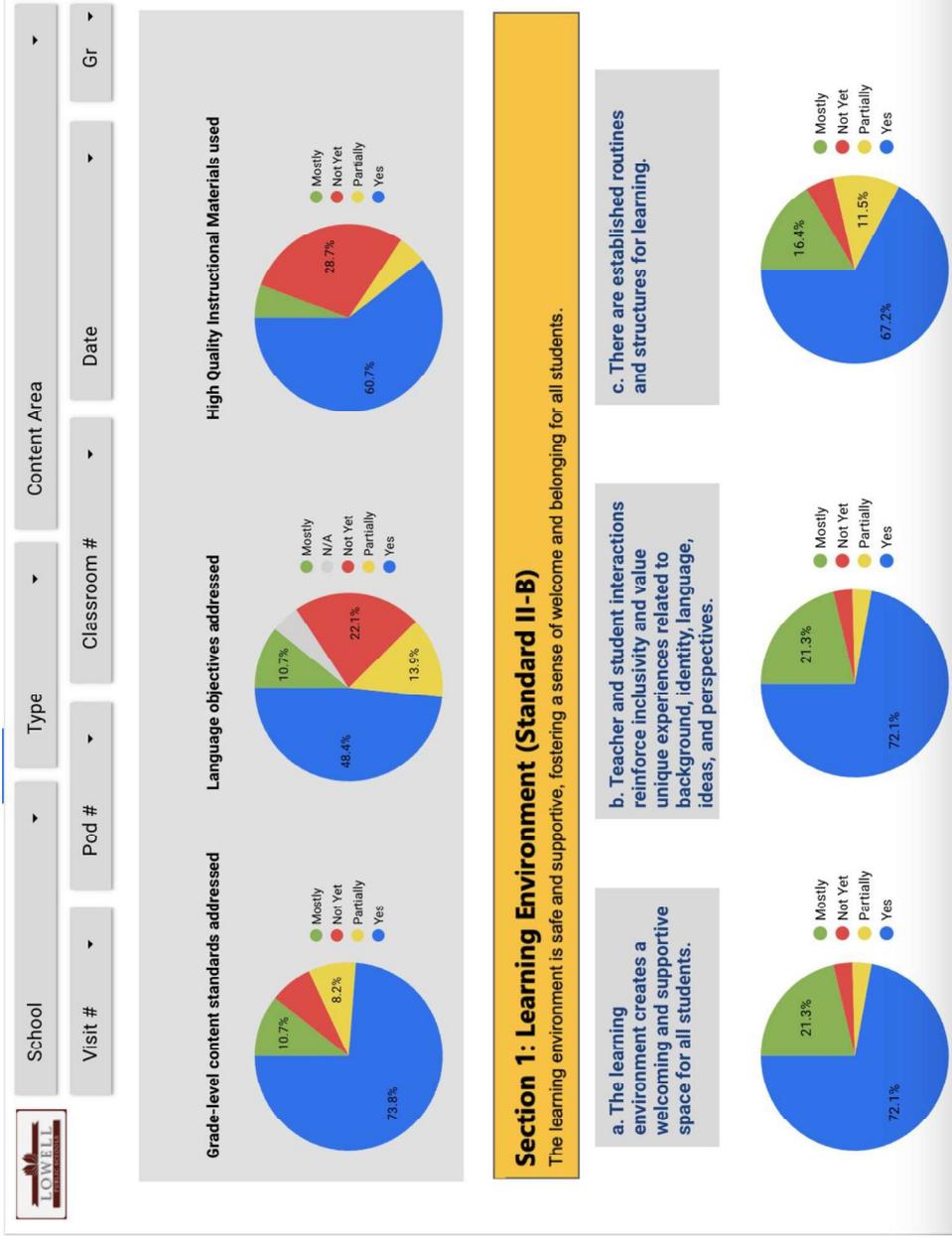
Additional IPD/Training Requests [Link to Spreadsheet](#)

ID	Status	Request Training in	School/Office	Name	Role	Topic	Description	Level
53		CLSP	Moody Elementary School	Heidi Upton	Teacher	CLSP	Training on bias and Washington Model for Bias.	EC/PK, KF, GR1, GR2, GR3, GR4
52		SCI/SS	Lowell High School	Urban/Cooper/Sel vaggio	Admin	Ellevation Too (Wida Levels)	Unpacking upcoming lesson in consideration of student Wica levels and appropriate scaffolds	GR9
51		MLE	Greenhalge Elementary School	Jennifer Scarpati	Admin	Para training on Can Do descriptors and language scaffolds	See above	KF, GR1, GR2, GR3, GR4
50	Actioned	MLE	McAuliffe Elementary School	David Anderson	Admin	Continuation of ELL Elevations Training for Paraprofessionals	Continuation of training from Election Day introducing the Paraprofessionals to WIDA and ELL Elevations.	EC/PK, KF, GR1, GR2, GR3, GR4

New Professional Learning Model Pilot- Tier 3

Schools in the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) engage in instructional rounds with district administrators using a new DESE rubric and data visualization system developed in our Data Office.

Several schools outside of the SSoS network have also utilized these rounds as we expand the practice.



New Professional Learning Model Pilot

Strengths:

- Increased access to district support staff for educators
- Frequent, predictable opportunities for structured collaboration directly with educators
- Less teacher time away from students for full-day PD
- Leadership teams can remain connected to the learning when it is done in-house

Challenges:

- Insufficient collaborative planning time for teachers, particularly in the elementary grades, small therapeutic schools, and high schools
- Planning/communication for CPTs ahead of each departmental visit to plan the time productively
- Lots of competing interests and priorities that all require dedicated time to address make sustainability difficult over time

Next Steps:

- Convene working groups to determine the feasibility of continuing the model and recommend modifications that will strengthen the professional learning structures
- Revise with an emphasis on coaching in service of our Culture of Continuous Improvement

LHS HQIM Implementation: StudySync and Reveal

- At the start of the year, Instructional Specialists were assigned to focus on curriculum implementation:
 - English: Deanna Stanford
 - Algebra: Katelyn Ventola
 - Geometry & Alg II: Patrick Morasse
- Since the start of the year, Instructional Specialists and Department chairs have been meeting twice a week in PLCs to support the new curriculum implementation. The work began with a modeling of lesson plan creation and has shifted to teachers creating the lesson plans using a shared template and folder to ensure collaboration and consistency of implementation.
- Walkthroughs and observations have been built into the Instructional Specialist model of support for HQIM this year
- Additionally Attuned continues to meet regularly with Department Chairs and Instructional Specialists virtually and has conducted two in person visits per department to review and support curriculum implementation.
- We are in the process of surveying teachers and students to get their feedback on the implementation process and will survey them again at the end of the school year.

Leadership Academy PD for District Prioritization Plan

August:

- **District Prioritization Plan:** Overview, WIDA Overview, & Unpacking Language Practices Across Content Areas
- **A Culture of Continuous Improvement:** Unpacking District & School Data to Align QIP Benchmarks, District Prioritization Plan, & Language Practices
- **Panel Discussion:** Centering the Voices of Students and Families in Our Prioritization Work

October:

- **District Prioritization Plan Focus:** Key Language Uses in Math & Science
- **District Prioritization Plan Focus:** Learning Targets and Student Discourse

December:

- **District Prioritization Plan:** Focus on Language Practices in Action

** Additional Prioritization Plan Sessions are planned for January, March, and May Leadership Academy*