

FAIRHAVEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
October 25, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Colin Veitch, Erik Andersen, Donna McKenna, Stephanie Pickup

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brian Monroe with prior notice.

STAFF PRESENT: Superintendent Tara Kohler, Assistant Superintendent Mark Balestracci, School Business Manager Nicole Potter, Executive Assistant Sheri Souza

OTHERS PRESENT: Members of the community, parents, Elizabeth Hastings Middle School (EHMS) Principal Kyle Alves

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Veitch at 6:35 pm.

Roll Call of Committee Members: Mr. Andersen, Ms. Pickup, Ms. McKenna, Mr. Veitch

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve regular session minutes from October 11, 2023 made by Ms. McKenna, seconded by Mr. Andersen, approved (4-0).

Report of the Student Advisory Committee:

Mr. Balestracci reported the students will be present at the next meeting.

Reports and Recommendations of the Superintendent:

Elizabeth Hastings Middle School Massachusetts Unified Champion School Recognition:

Mr. Balestracci introduced the principal of EHMS, Kyle Alves, to help celebrate EHMS receiving the 2022-2023 Unified Champion School through the Massachusetts Special Olympics. Mr. Alves explained that several of the school's students participated in the Special Olympics. They also met three of the major components needed to receive the award; the Student Council is an Integrated Club, the school has a unified basketball team, and participated in Fans in the Stands, which included the entire Fairhaven community, students, staff and families that came out to support and cheer on the students. Mr. Alves thanked his staff for the time and effort put into running the program. The Committee members congratulated EHMS on receiving the award.

Receive Update on 2023 Statewide MCAS Trends:

Mr. Balestracci shared with the Committee a presentation on the 2023 Statewide MCAS trends (Attachment A). He noted this was the first year of really establishing new cut scores and new thresholds for students to achieve in both ELA and Math as well as Science. As a Commonwealth the State performed the lowest it ever has. Fairhaven is in line with the State. Mr. Balestracci explained via the presentation what our thresholds look like, what our performance looks like, and gave a summary of how we are addressing any shortcomings. Mrs. Kohler added some of the results proved the need to continue the writing initiative so that students attempt to answer open response questions. Mr. Balestracci noted we will continue to have high expectations and work toward those goals. Mr. Veitch asked if Acushnet has shared data in regards to grades K-8. Acushnet students are one third of our high school population. Mrs. Kohler noted she and the Acushnet Superintendent have spoken about this in the past and had some cooperative meetings, feedback was welcomed.

Receive Quarterly Enrollment Update:

Mrs. Kohler shared the quarterly enrollment (Attachment B). She noted out of district placements are stable. She stated we are working with a new company that will provide enrollment trend reports. Mrs. Pickup asked if Fairhaven limits the amount of new neighborhoods or properties being built so the school system is not overwhelmed. Mrs. Kohler was unsure of any limitations, but noted the Town's Planning and Development Department has involved the District in some of the bigger projects that may affect the schools.

Upcoming Events:

The next School Committee meeting will be held November 15, 2023. There will also be a joint meeting with the Select Board on November 6, 2023 to elect a new School Committee member.

Unfinished Business:

Update on Acushnet Discussion:

Mr. Vietch reminded the Committee of Mr. Monroe's update at the last meeting regarding his unofficial communication with the Vice-Chair of the Acushnet School Committee. Mr. Veitch wrote an email to the Chair of the Acushnet School Committee and will be sending a formal letter as well. Mr. Monroe had shared at the last meeting that the Acushnet Vice Chair reached out to him back in May and then again in August via text stating Acushnet is entertaining a possibility of entering into a regional school district agreement with us. Then in October during an open house the Acushnet Vice Chair mentioned to Mr. Monroe that Acushnet had a meeting with Old Rochester Regional about a possible tuition attendance agreement with them. Mr. Vietch stated this is two conflicting points of data, again stating with no formal communication as of yet. Mrs. Kohler stated to the committee that in September she received a formal text from Mr. Monroe that she would be hearing from the Superintendent's secretary in Acushnet about setting up a meeting regarding the regionalization. She would like to go on record stating they have not reached out to her office yet. Mr. Veitch reiterated the formal letter will go out tomorrow and we will place the Acushnet topic back on the agenda at the next meeting.

New Business:

Motion to approve late travel for the Fairhaven High School (FHS) music field trip to New York City was made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Ms. McKenna, approved, (4-0).

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Mr. Veitch stated the Select Board and the Finance Committee decided to review Fairhaven's financial policies by creating a Finance Policy Review Committee. There is a book of policies they will share, with regular meetings to discuss reviewing and updating. They have two members from the Select Board, two from the Finance Committee and they have asked to have two from the School Committee. Mr. Vietch and Mr. Monroe have volunteered to be on the committee. Mr. Andersen volunteered to be an alternate in case of an absence.

A nomination to appoint Brian Monroe as a School Committee Representative of the Financial Policy Review Committee was made by Ms. McKenna, seconded by Mr. Vietch, , approved, (4-0).

A nomination to appoint Colin Veitch as a School Committee Representative of the Financial Policy Review Committee was made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Ms. McKenna, approved, (4-0).

Questions from Individual Committee Members:

Mrs. Pickup asked how club, class, and team accounts work. She asked who manages them. Mrs. Kohler and Mrs. Potter stated there are policies in place to govern all the different types of accounts. Anyone handling the accounts receives training from the business office. Any questions regarding the policies or procedures can be directed to the business office at the Ad Center. Mrs. Pickup asked who sets the policies. Mrs. Kohler explained that the School Committee handles financial policies, but these procedures run out of the Business Office due to all the auditing that takes place with the different accounts.

Mrs. Pickup also asked about parent donations to clubs, sports, etc. Mrs. Kohler stated that all donations have to be approved by the School Committee so there are no ethical violations.

Mrs. Kohler added one last comment regarding MCAS. MCAS is meant to tell how schools are doing and how the curriculum is doing, it's not meant to tell us who is smart and who is not. Ms. McKenna agreed stating that a student who is smart, may not test well in the MCAS format. Mrs. Kohler reiterated that it is one piece of a larger, more important item.

Motion to adjourn and go into Executive Session to discuss security personnel and devices made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Mr. McKenna, roll call vote, approved, (4-0).

Adjourned at 7:18 pm.

Sheri Souza
Secretary to the School Committee
Fairhaven Public Schools

Approved November 15, 2023

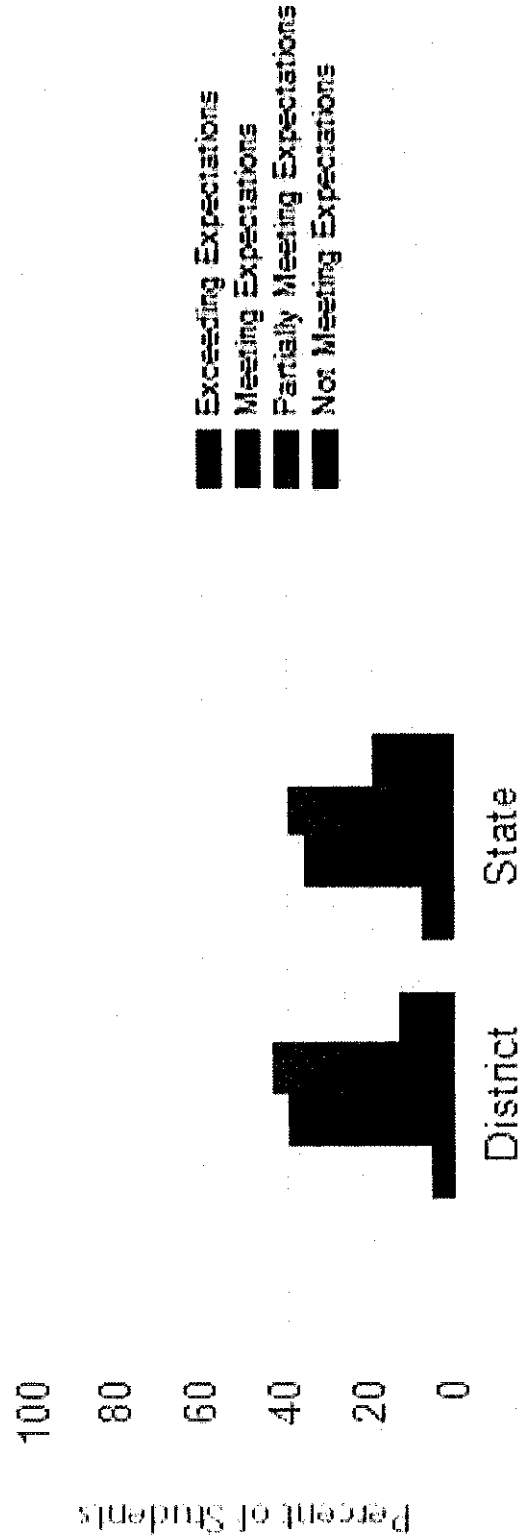
Fairhaven Public Schools

2023 MCAS Data Presentation



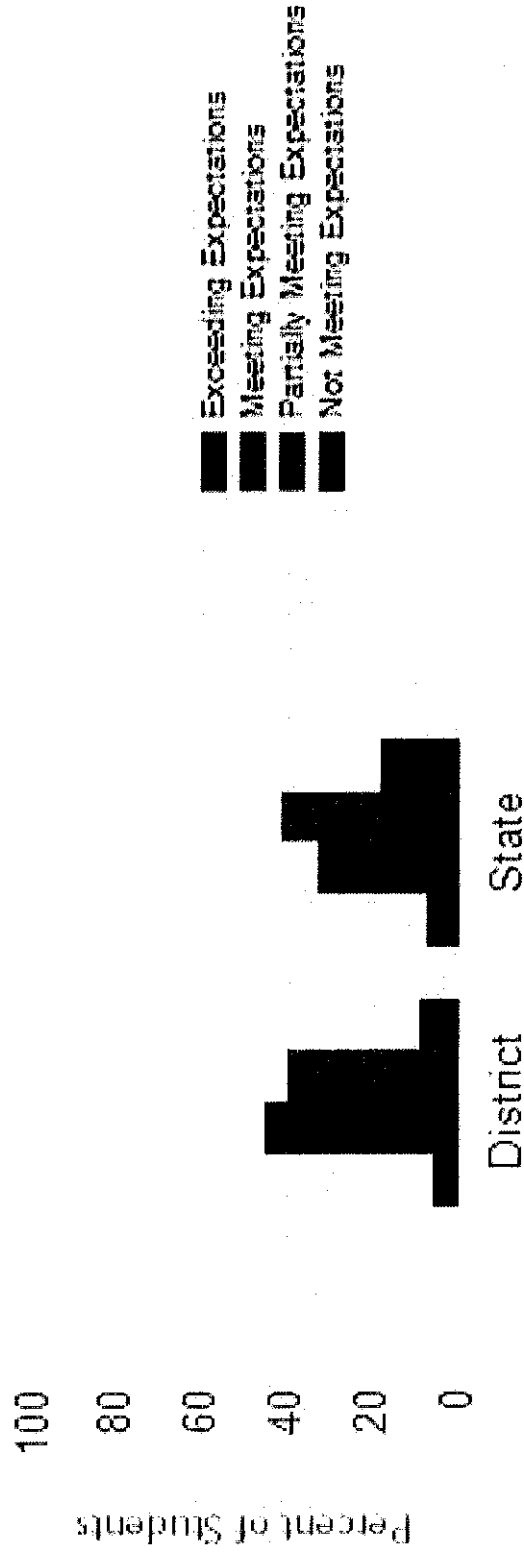
General Trends vs. State

English Language Arts - Grades 3-8
All Students



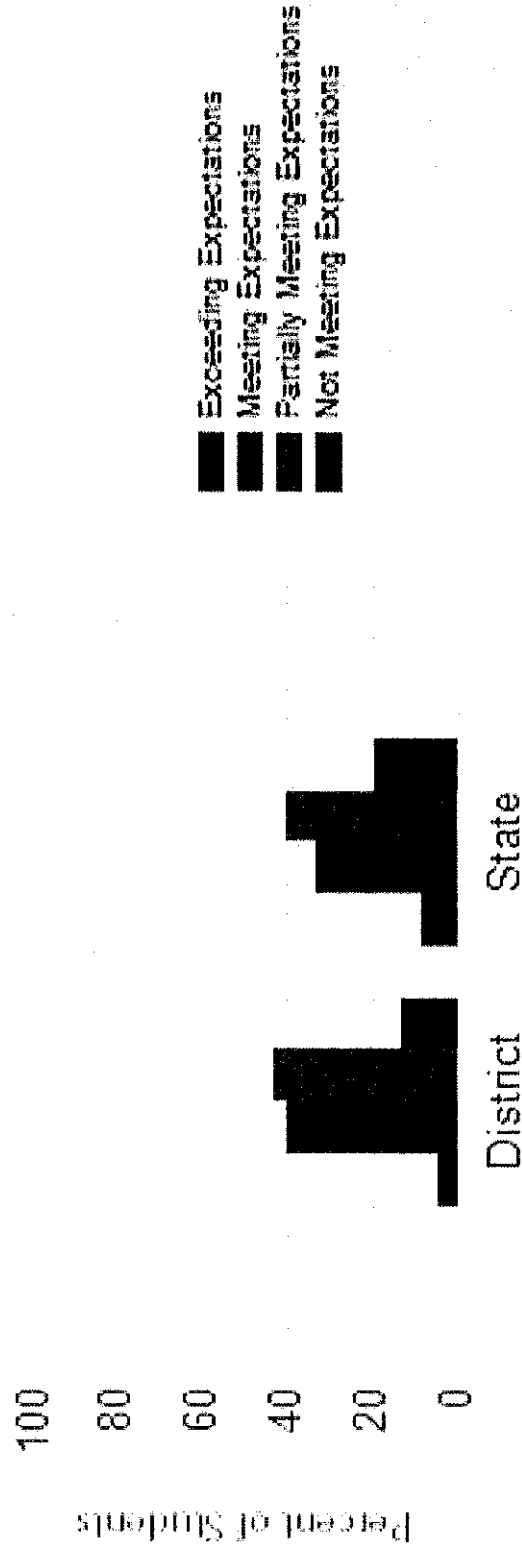
General Trends vs. State

Mathematics - Grades 3-8
All Students

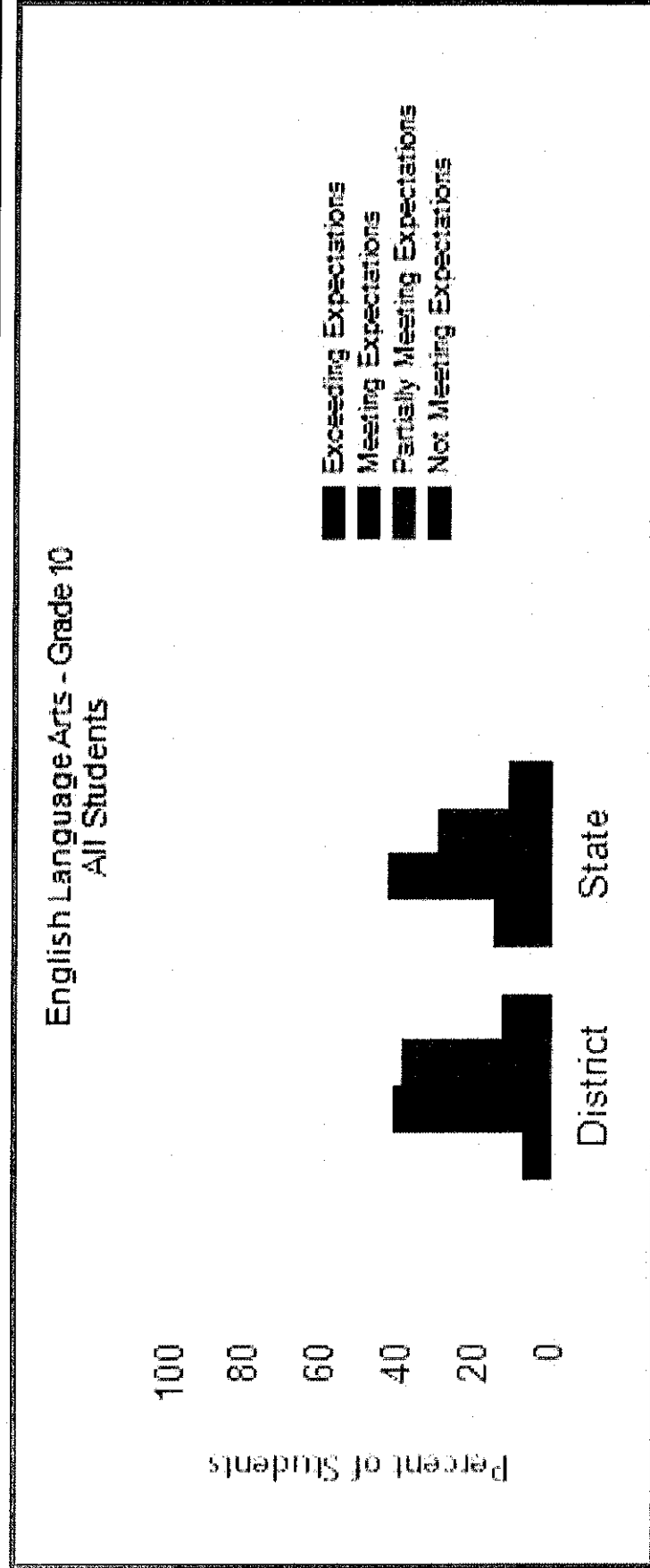


General Trends vs. State

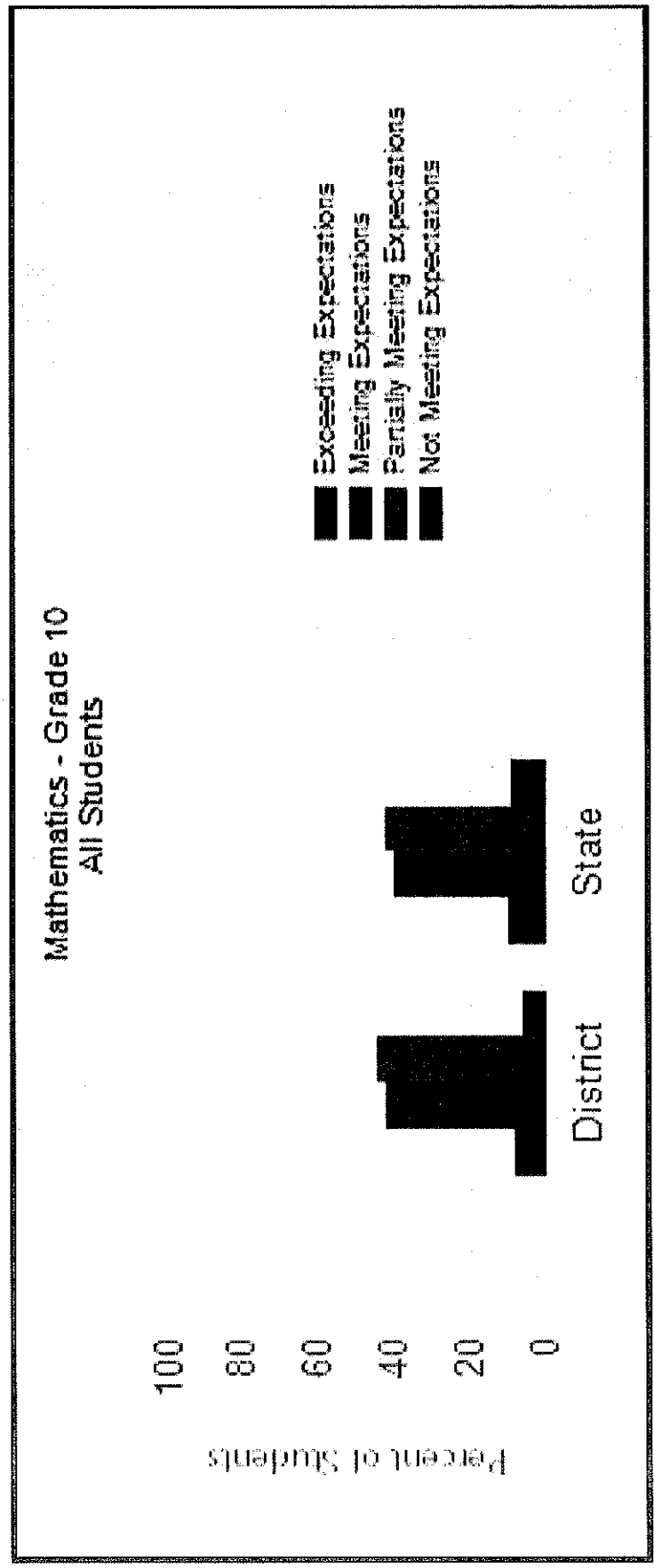
Science and Technology/Engineering - Grade 5
All Students



General Trends vs. State

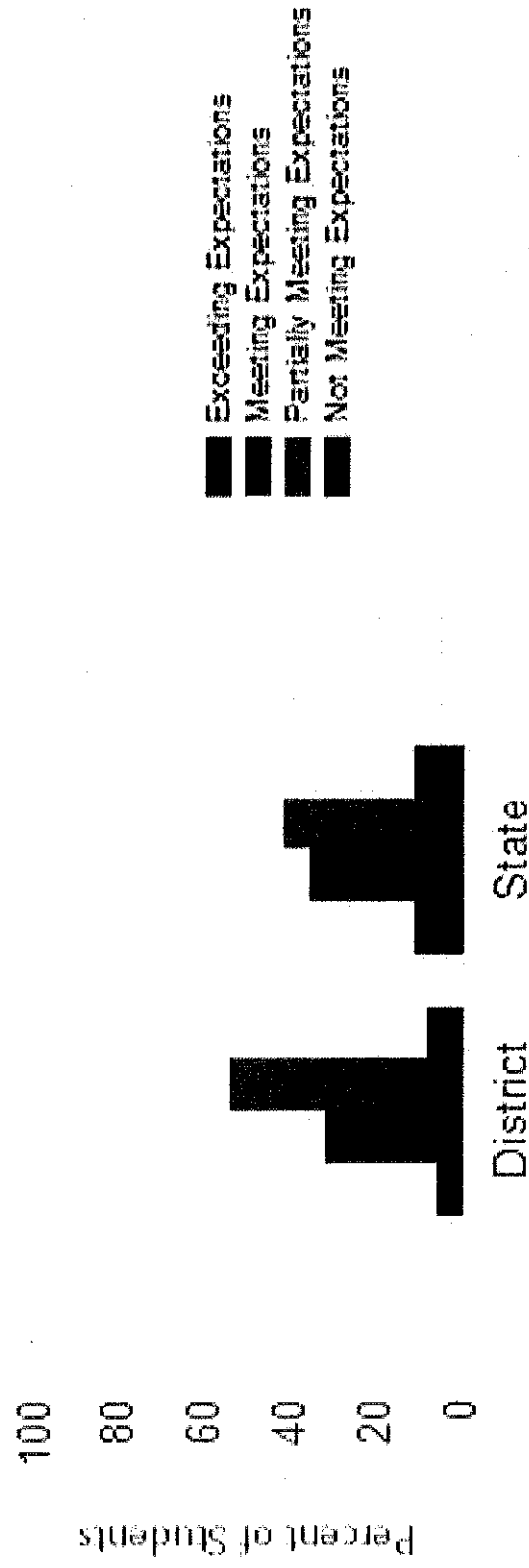


General Trends vs. State



General Trends vs. State

Science and Technology/Engineering - Grade 10
All Students



Highlights

ELA

Grade 5: 51% Student Growth Percentile

MATH

Grade 5: 60% Student Growth Percentile

Grade 7: 55% Student Growth Percentile

Grade 8: 65% Student Growth Percentile



Summary and Next Steps



The Fairhaven Public Schools achieved at a level in line with overall state results.



School-based leadership teams have conducted deep dives into their respective school results and have plans in place to address areas for growth and improvement



The District is providing ongoing professional development and support to improve student outcomes by using research-based strategies focus on UDL (Universal Design for Learning and SEL (Social/Emotional Learning))

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